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**Suffering angels: Images of children in nineteenth century
drama**

Ruff, Felicia J., Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1991

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SUFFERING ANGELS: IMAGES OF
CHILDREN IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY DRAMA

by

FELICIA J. RUFF

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in Theatre in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1991

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

4-24-91
Date

Daniel Gerould
Chair of Examining Committee
Prof. Daniel Gerould

4-26-91
Date

Marvin Carlson
Executive Officer
Marvin Carlson

Stanley Kauffmann
Prof. Stanley Kauffmann

Charles Gattng
Prof. Charles Gattng
Supervisory Committee

Abstract

SUFFERING ANGELS: THE IMAGE OF
CHILDREN IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY DRAMA

by

Felicia J. Ruff

Advisor: Professor Daniel Gerould

Children and childhood captured the imagination of nineteenth-century writers and theatre audiences. Concern for children exploded during the period, manifesting itself in legal, educational, and familial reforms and powerfully intruding into literature in poetry, fiction, and drama. In nineteenth-century European and North American society, children were placed at first in a position of neglect and enforced maturity but were ultimately exalted in literature; for even when suffering, their sensitive natures set them above the corruption of adult society. Transformed by romantic poets and writers at the turn of the eighteenth century, the child-image came to represent particular attributes, such as helplessness, innocence, and purity.

While the image of children has been carefully studied in the poetry and fiction of the century, the child-image in drama has not yet been the subject of critical analysis. This study attempts to fill that

critical void and reveals that dramatists of varying periods and temperaments found this new symbolic character particularly suited to their needs. Melodramatists found the child perfectly suited to the role of victim, while other child characters were portrayed as innocent vessels capable of spiritual cleansing. In the later, more poetic works of Ibsen, Wedekind, and Maeterlinck, certain characteristics such as naive purity and helplessness are retained, yet the treatment is more oblique and, unlike melodrama, undermines traditional middle class values.

The treatment of children changed as the drama developed throughout the century. Initially, the child's sensational and pathetic qualities were exploited by melodramatists who established the basic iconographic motifs which were later transformed by thematically and structurally experimental playwrights. And yet all children throughout the century were united in their capacity for suffering and goodness. Their helplessness and innocence were the inspiration for the title of this study--suffering angels--because each of these young innocents was superior to the polluted adult society they were forced to inhabit.

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I am anxious, before initiating the requisite critical discussion, to go beyond a mere acknowledgement in order to warmly and generously thank all those who have contributed their energy, knowledge, and support to this project. The time and energy devoted to pursuing this degree have brought innumerable rewards, but the greatest have been the bonds I have formed with friends, family, colleagues, and advisors during the recent years. Indeed the bonds sometimes feel so close that distinctions between friend and colleague, family and advisor, seem to disappear.

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Prof. Kauffmann's comprehensive seminar in Victorian and Edwardian Theatre provided a wealth of information and interesting perspectives which were vital to this work as well as to my interest in the period. Prof. Gattnig's dedication, energy, and insights motivated my

coursework and, more particularly, this dissertation. Finally, I must especially thank Prof. Gerould in whose seminar I discovered the seed of this project and who, through his wealth of knowledge, vigilant support, and good humor, has provided me with an inspiring model of scholarly creativity.

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To Nana who is always so proud.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The topic of this dissertation grew out of a graduate seminar in melodrama, a genre which grew to maturity and flourished in the nineteenth century. While exploring the child's place in melodrama, I realized that the child's emergence on the stage reflected, in fact, a profound change in the place of children in society. As this dissertation will elaborate, a child's rights began to be considered with the same seriousness and concern for equality and care that was being declared, debated, and fought for in various Western countries throughout the nineteenth century.

Debates regarding the underprivileged and underclasses raged as individual rights were extended to more and more people, not without tremendous resistance but with ultimate success. Women, the poor, and North American slaves declared their rights or, when necessary, had their rights declared for them. For children, in a sense the most silent and least organized political body, individual rights had to be secured by others; throughout the nineteenth century, politicians,

philanthropists, philosophers, and others struggled and triumphed as they instituted policies to protect children from societal and familial exploitation. This interest in children was reflected in literary forms throughout the century.

Statement of Purpose

The vitality of the child-image infused the works of painters, poets, novelists, and playwrights throughout the nineteenth century; however, while literary historians have frequently paid tribute to the child-image, particularly in poetry and fiction, few have surveyed its place on the stage, a recurring motif in both artistically masterful and popular drama. This study will, I hope, redress this neglect. The purpose of this dissertation is to critically investigate the major elements of the child's image on the nineteenth-century stage and to examine the evolution of the predominant images from melodramatic extremes through Ibsen's subversion of conventions to the oblique transformations of late nineteenth-century dramatists.

While the title indicates that the plays to be discussed are from the nineteenth century, it is often argued that the nineteenth century ended in 1914 with the beginning of World War I. The plays covered extend to approximately that point. Several

playwrights including Barrie, Belasco, and Maeterlinck are among those turn-of-the-century writers whose aesthetic temperaments continued to correspond to the cultural topography of the nineteenth century while they lived well into the next century. Thus, regardless of dramatic style or innovation, these later works remain part of the nineteenth-century continuum and deserve inclusion in this survey.

When one considers the child's place on the stage, it is significant to note the history of nineteenth-century child performers. An examination of child roles reveals that parts were rarely assigned to actors based on age.¹ For example, beginning in 1804 with the juvenile sensation, Master Betty, child actors frequently made names for themselves in England by playing adult characters such as Lear and Hamlet. In his "Ode" Wordsworth wrote of the range of parts a child-actor assumed:

The little Actor cons another part;
 Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
 With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
 That Life brings with her in her equipage;

¹The practice of using children to perform adult roles is not unique to the nineteenth century. In Elizabethan theatre, for instance, boys, besides playing women, also played old men. See Harold Newcomb Hillebrand, The Child Actors: A Chapter in Elizabethan Stage History (NY: Russell and Russell, 1964) and Basudeo Sharma, "Children's Troupes: Dramatic Illusion and Acting. Style," Comparative Drama 8 (Spring 1969): 42-53.

As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation.²

Conversely, adults played children's roles; for example, Mrs. George C. Howard played Topsy in Uncle Tom's Cabin opposite her daughter's Little Eva in the Howard family's successful stage version in Troy, New York, 1852³, and Cordelia Howard played Little Eva for thirty-five years.

Neither were roles always assigned by gender. Little girls were as likely to perform Hamlet as Ophelia, and young woman often originated boy's parts such as East Lynne's Little William. The most famous dismissal of gender and age is found in Peter Pan where Peter is played by a young but mature female, a stage convention established by Nina Boucicault in 1904 at the Duke of York Theatre (where it was produced by Charles Frohman) and continued today. In Peter Pan this blurring of gender is partly an extension of the "breeches

²William Wordsworth, "Ode," 7.102-107, An Anthology of Famous English and American Poetry, ed. William Rose Benet and Conrad Aiken (NY: The Modern Library, 1945), 203. In 1804 when Wordsworth composed the "Ode" the child-actor Master Betty was creating a theatrical sensation. See Nina Auerbach's Private Theatricals: The Lives of the Victorians (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 35-36 where she links the "lure of the stage child" with Wordsworth's poem.

³Garff B. Wilson, Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre: From "Ye Bare and Ye Cubb" to "Hair" (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 202-203.

parts" made famous during the Restoration by Anne Bracegirdle and, later, in English burlesque and pantomime where females impersonated and caricatured male heroes. However, Barrie's fantasy attempts to play against the sexual titillation inherent in cross-gender casting. In nineteenth-century stage conventions gender and age are mutable, implying that the stage children were not conceived as real, multidimensional personalities. Rather, they functioned as symbolic vessels, able to embody certain ideals through direct visual suggestion. Further, their addition to a dramatic work could, like musical accompaniment, induce certain emotional states, and serve as a guaranteed means with which to entertain an audience.

The cult of the child was by no means confined to English and American literature. While a majority of the plays to be discussed are English and North American, other playwrights, particularly from Scandinavia, Germany, and Belgium, who explored the child-motif will be included. My main criterion for selecting plays is neither the quality of the work nor the nationality of the author, but the characteristics of the child.

Review of the Literature

Literary criticism has left a void regarding the child on stage although there is a significant body of work which analyzes with the child's place in literature, commenting on notable writers to whom the child is a central character or image, such as Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, William Wordsworth, Victor Hugo, and Charles Dodgson. However, three especially insightful works which tackle the broader issues of the child in literature have been influential in laying the foundations for the present study: David Grylls's Guardians and Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth-Century Literature; Peter Coveney's The Image of Childhood: The Individual and Society: a Study of the Theme in English Literature; and Reinhard Kuhn's Corruption in Paradise: The Child in Western Literature.⁴ The last is a fascinating account, notable for its clarity and encompassing scope. Kuhn's work perceptively classifies four patterns of childhood in literature: 1) the enigmatic child, which includes the menacing child and the redemptive

⁴Grylls, Guardians and Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth-Century Literature (Boston: Faber and Gaber, 1978), Coveney, The Image of Childhood: The Individual and Society: a Study of the Theme in English Literature, revised edition with an Introduction by F.R. Leavis (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1967), Kuhn, Corruption in Paradise: The Child in Western Literature (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1982).

child; 2) the domain of childhood which encompasses heaven, earth, and hell; 3) the corruption of the child's special realm; and 4) the death of the child. Fortunately, Kuhn's book was the first critical investigation that I examined and his scholarship revealed the topic's breadth and significance, quelling my initial fears that it was merely cute and trivial. Not only the distinguished selection of authors he examines--among them Dante, Chaucer, Hugo, and Dostoevski--but the fascinating issues Kuhn brings to light substantiate the thematic importance of children in the minds of the most creative and profound literary thinkers.

Peter Coveney's survey focuses on nineteenth-century English writers and touches on fiction, poetry, and drama (although only Barrie represents the latter). Coveney traces the roots of the child-image in nineteenth-century England and then sensitively outlines the progressive popularization of the child-image throughout the century, beginning with Blake and Wordsworth who found intellectual and poetic significance in the child, to Dickens's humane yet more sentimental portraits, to Mrs. Henry Wood's utterly melodramatic use of them in her novel East Lynne (1861). Further, the romantic ideal of integrating the rational, mature, pensive adult with

the imaginative, impulsive, creative child is contrasted by Coveney with the desire by several turn-of-the-century writers to "escape into childhood," not by integrating these two realms but by avoiding adult reality through reverting to and hiding in childhood.

David Grylls's Guardians and Angels admirably achieves his goal of tracing nineteenth-century British attitudes toward children and their place in the family by examining the literature of the period. His primary contribution is to glean from literary sources the feelings towards children as they developed throughout the century. Grylls identifies a tension between two opposing views of childhood: one, identified with Rousseau, asserts the child's primal innocence and evangelical morality, and the other, identified with the Calvinist/Wesleyan tradition, conceives of the child as inherently sinful and impure. He indicates how these attitudes were reflected in a wide variety of quality as well as popular literary works and were manifested in social reforms that include the Factory Acts of 1819 and 1833, the establishment of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (1888), and the Children's Charter (1889).

Probably the best-known body of criticism is

found in works that analyze the most famous nineteenth-century writers on childhood, notably Dickens, Wordsworth, Hugo, Twain, Dostoevski, Sologub, and Kafka. Many of these studies have been helpful in clarifying the various manifestations of childhood in works of the century's major literary artists. Sologub, to take a specific instance, did not include child characters in his plays (except for his dramatization of his novel The Petty Demon) but he did include them in his fiction; consequently, Stanley Rabinowitz's Sologub's Literary Children: Keys to a Symbolist's Prose⁵ has been helpful in establishing a framework for deciphering what the child evoked for symbolist writers and has contributed to determining how the child figured in other symbolist works, such as those of Ibsen and Maeterlinck. Thus the larger body of prose and poetic criticism has provided an extended framework with which to define issues that reappear in dramatic works.

Two dissertations have dealt with the topic of the child on stage. Lynn Friedman's "Children in Eighteenth-Century English Dramatic Literature" (Florida State University, 1969) is helpful,

⁵Rabinowitz, Sologub's Literary Children: Keys to a Symbolist's Prose (Columbus, OH: Slavica Publishers, 1980).

especially for its thoroughness. She has uncovered a surprising mine of children who appeared on the eighteenth-century English stage. The impulse toward sentimentality (which certainly carried over to the following century) adopted children as a device to generate tears, yet I confess that without her substantial documentation I would have assumed that few children had appeared on the stage of the period. Friedman groups children into several large but cogent categories, including children: as instruments of sympathy, as conveyors of the author's message, as the focus of the action, and as components in the domestic sphere.

She has uncovered many entertaining examples of eighteenth-century stage children, among them a version of Antony and Cleopatra which domesticates the lovers by giving them offspring (one named Little Cleo) and by depicting their family life when, for instance, Antony wrestles with his little boy. Friedman also discusses the adaptation of Richard III by Colley Cibber in which he depicts the murder of the two young princes on stage.⁶ The examples she describes indicate that the period's

⁶Laurence Olivier uses parts of Cibber's version in his film version of Richard III, including a lengthy court scene with the two young princes, as well as their murder.

dramatists found children a useful device to heighten the plight of the hero or heroine or to increase the emotional impact of a scene--functions which were definitely continued by nineteenth-century writers, as will be addressed later. However, based on the evidence offered by Friedman, there is little indication that writers of the eighteenth century thought about children as independent, sentient beings. Their interest is solely in the emotional effect a child could have on an audience and not in the unique qualities that they could bring to a work as individuals.

Although Crozier's "Notions of Childhood in London Theatre 1880-1905" (Cambridge University, 1981) covers the period on which I have focused, his scope and intentions differ from mine. He deals only with popular English theatre, primarily melodramas and burlesques, and uses the theatre of the period as a barometer with which to determine social attitudes adopted by late Victorian society toward children. Crozier identifies a change of the child-symbol from one of victimization (especially melodramatic children) to one of comic vitality (most notably Peter Pan). He traces the source of the image of victim and comic-child to lower class interests. These two images are then distinguished

from the romantic cult of childhood which was a middle and upper middle class idea.

Interested not in the analysis of drama but rather in sociology, Crozier uses the theatre to study changing social concepts and values. For example, Crozier uses several melodramas by George R. Sims to establish the use of the child as a symbol of poverty which mirrored the social concerns of his working class audience. Crozier argues that these melodramas in which children play central roles reflect various social developments--primarily the suburbanization of the lower classes and the increasingly domestic tone of their culture. He further claims that the change in the image reveals "a general tendency in late Victorian society to see the child less in passive sentimental terms and more as a character in his own right capable of independent action."⁷ Ultimately, he expands this analogy, asserting that "a changing sense of class identity [was] dictated early in the period by poverty and social deprivation and later by a sense of the vitality and humor of working class life."⁸ This study essentially attempts to identify specific

⁷Brian Crozier, (Ph.D. diss. Cambridge University, 1981), 133.

⁸Ibid., 133.

class experiences which created and shaped certain aspects of the child symbol.

Crozier's study covers little of what I have selected to discuss. Generally, the works on which he focuses are unpublished melodramas and while he is interested in the phenomenon of theatre in the nineteenth century his analysis uses theatre to explain social trends. The main correspondence between Crozier's and this present dissertation is that both make reference to the major critical and historical works regarding children described above. Consequently, while his study may offer valuable historical analysis, the ideas discussed here have been arrived at independently, do not cover the same issues, and have different perspectives.

As indicated by critics of the period, the angelic if brutalized image of children saturated the literature and art of the century. However, with the exception of Crozier's dissertation, none have addressed the role of the child on stage, a function as new and dynamic in drama as in contemporary fiction or poetry.

Outline

While literary figures, with the exception of Charles Dickens, did not necessarily champion issues

of child exploitation, they did find the child to be a unique and powerful artistic image. This study begins by delineating societal recognition of the child and its emergence in early romantic literature and thought. After describing the changes that affected the child's position in literature and society, Chapter 2 examines the early image of children. Chapter 3 discusses the child in melodrama, the popular nineteenth-century genre which established primary uses and images of the child. As an embodiment of goodness, helplessness, and sometimes even holiness, the child in melodrama proved an effective dramatic device for playwrights in search of ways of moving their audiences. Chapter 4 is devoted exclusively to Ibsen and many of the children who appear in his work. Although his plays are far removed from melodrama, Ibsen subtly incorporates conventional nineteenth-century images of children and then subverts the simplistic values these conventional images support. Chapter 5 considers children in the works of "post-Ibsen" writers or, more exactly, such late nineteenth-century writers as Maeterlinck, Wedekind, Barrie, and Hauptmann. The more complex, even bizarre, uses the child is employed for are discussed in this chapter in order to complete an overview of the

century and delineate the development of the child-image. Chapter 6 summarizes the study.

CHAPTER 2
THE DISCOVERY OF CHILDHOOD

He Who Sees a Child, Sees Nothing.
(Medieval Proverb)

In Europe and the United States, children occupy an unusually large place in the pantheon of nineteenth-century literary heroes; a short list of famous juveniles includes *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *Little Eppie*, *Little Eva*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Tom Sawyer*, and *Alice*. Indeed, a hallmark of the century is the way in which the intellectual and popular imagination was captured by these tiny beings; a profound fondness was exhibited for children--both fictional and human. Adults were intrigued by the workings of the child's mind and emotions; this new sensitivity spawned social reforms which radically changed the child's place in the home, school, factory, legal system, and church as well as in literature.

British reforms serve as an excellent case in point. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, orphans and children abandoned by parents could be, for all intents and purposes, sold into slavery and made to work--most notoriously as chimney sweeps--more than twelve hours a day, six and a half days a week in mines, textile factories, and small businesses. Struggling in abominable conditions

that sound disturbingly like those in concentration camps, young factory employees, who comparatively were not the worst off, were crammed into huge halls with rows of lice-infested beds which were used in shifts. While half the tiny laborers slept, the other half worked, exchanging places at the end of a twelve-hour shift. Their dangerous jobs often resulted in mutilation or death; the 1819 records of the Manchester Dispensary for Children indicate that of the eight hundred factory children examined, only one quarter could be deemed healthy¹ (the criteria for good health must have been quite liberal). Rickets was so common among these young laborers that they were regularly called factory cripples.²

Changes slowly evolved as concern for child-care grew decade by decade. As early as 1802, the English government attempted to regulate child labor by limiting the work of indigent apprentices to twelve hours a day and in 1819 by outlawing the employment of children under nine. However, because no system for enforcing the new laws was established, illegal and unfair child-labor

¹Marjorie Cruickshank, Children and Industry: Child Health and Welfare in North-West Textile Towns During the Nineteenth Century, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), 41.

²Ibid., 43.

practices continued unabated and unregulated. The Factory Act of 1833 addressed the issue of inspection but was limited to overseeing conditions in factories and had no jurisdiction over small businesses which were conceived of as an extension of the family, with parent or guardian given absolute authority to dispense any reward or punishment deemed appropriate. Moreover, inspection did not guarantee improved conditions.

Once the government had made inroads into regulating a child's treatment in the public sector, it slowly began to assert responsibility in the private sphere. By 1889 the "Child's Charter" was passed, asserting that a child could be taken from cruel parents and committed to institutional care--a radical intrusion into what had traditionally been sanctioned as patriarchal, religious and familial duty. By the end of the century, through varying degrees of commitment and struggle, radical changes had taken place both in opinion and in fact; laws attempted to protect children at school, work, and home.

These political developments paralleled the reconceptualization of the family throughout the nineteenth century, redefining the roles of mother, father, and child and reassigning their places

within the family hierarchy and social structure. For example, before the late eighteenth century, motherhood was aligned primarily with childbearing and made distinct from childrearing which was often assumed by a separate female or social institution. After Rousseau (whose contribution to the place of the child in society will be discussed in greater detail shortly) and the redefinition of motherhood by the wealthier classes in Europe and United States, motherhood was linked with childrearing. As a result, the practice of abandoning offspring to orphanages, apprenticeships, other families, or religious shelters came increasingly to be considered unnatural and immoral.³

Before this redefinition of the family, high

³John R. Gillis, "Centuries of Childrearing," Wilson Quarterly vol. XIII (Spring 1989): 100-101. This abuse and relegation of children to a secondary, servant class deeply enmeshed in the social hierarchy has hardly disappeared. A Haitian friend whose family is comparatively wealthy, describes the "'Ti-moun ki rete ka moun" ("little people who do things for other people"), little girls who are given by poor families to wealthy ones to serve as housekeepers. "You know, they would get your shoes for you." In exchange for household chores the family houses, clothes, and feeds the child who lives with the family until about sixteen years of age. My friend tells of his mother's uniquely "democratic" treatment of these young employees: feeding them well, giving them new clothes rather than hand-me-downs, teaching them to read. But he also recalls how severely she would beat or humiliate them, exhibiting a ferocity that continues to haunt him. Clearly the Dickensian world of child poverty has not entirely disappeared.

adult mortality and endemic poverty were two primary factors affecting the way in which children were treated because frequently they were orphaned or placed an unbearable burden on a family's exceedingly limited resources.⁴ However, these two factors do not negate or disguise a history of neglect and abuse. Abandonment meant not only finding a monastery or family that would accept responsibility for raising a child but also resulted in their sale to factories, small businesses, theatres, choirs, or brothels. The historian of childhood must repeatedly document incidents of abuse during ages which denied a child's individual rights and provided no protection for them from callous adults, be they parents, schoolmasters, or employers.

One example may suffice to summarize the general plight of children who were provided with no defense from individual or group exploitation before legal reforms were enacted. In 1761 an English woman, Anne Martin, was sentenced to imprisonment in Newgate, "accused of putting out the eyes of those

⁴The reader may be reminded of the opening scene of Oliver Twist.

with whom she went begging about the country."⁵ Her sentence, however, was a mere two years at a time when petty theft could result in hanging--for minors as well as for adults. The legal system's blatant disregard for or abdication from protecting children exceeds the callousness of this revolting crime.

The roots of recognizing childhood as a special period demanding care and protection are traced by most historians of family life⁶ to a radical shift in attitude that began in the mid-eighteenth century. Jean-Jacques Rousseau was in large part responsible for the upheaval of past notions of childhood, particularly through his novels Julie (1761) and, more significantly, Emile (1762).⁷ The

⁵Rosamond Bayne-Powell, The English Child in the Eighteenth Century (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1939), 149.

⁶Among the most influential studies are Philippe Aries's Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), and Lawrence Stone's The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977). Stone's book was written largely as a critical response to Aries. Stone feels Aries overestimates the point at which the special nature of the child received general recognition. Instead Stone sees Emile as the starting point for recognizing childhood as a distinct phase of life.

⁷Emile traces the development of a boy from infancy to young adulthood, analyzing the various stages in his maturity and discussing the best strategies for his education. The book had a tremendous impact on educational and literary thinking (and nearly got Rousseau arrested). Two helpful analyses are Sylvia Patterson's Rousseau's "Emile" and

foundation for the romantic conception of childhood was in England between the time of publication of Emile and Wordsworth's Prelude (1805).

Prior to Rousseau, the prevailing European and American attitudes regarding children and their upbringing focused on restriction and punishment. Infants, after being sinfully conceived, were viewed as predisposed to commit sin. In A Tok[en?] for Children Reverend Janeway advises parents to "take some time daily to speak to your children one by one about their miserable condition by nature." He also exhorts parents to remind them, "They are not too little to die, not too little to go to hell."⁸ As late as 1892 Leslie Stephen stated, citing his American colleague, "If human nature is corrupt and therefore hateful to God, [Jonathan] Edwards is quite right in declaring the bursting bud as hateful as the full-grown tree."⁹

This puritanical position did not exempt infants from evil and it encouraged a system which justified the earliest possible destruction of the

Early Children's Literature (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1971) and Edward Duffy's Rousseau in England: The Context for Shelley's Critique of the Enlightenment (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

⁸Janeway, cited by Coveney, 44.

⁹Stephen, quoted by Grylls, 24.

individual will in order that thoughts and actions be redirected toward God. The father was given supreme authority in overseeing the moral and religious indoctrination of his offspring, a responsibility considered a sacred duty which encouraged the employment of any means available or conceivable in attempting to subordinate childish impulses.

Samuel Butler (1835-1902) scrutinizes and ridicules this abuse of parental authority in The Way of All Flesh (published posthumously 1903).

The practical outcome . . . was a conviction in Theobald's mind, and if in his, then in Christina's, that it was their duty to begin training up their children in the way they should go, even from their earliest infancy. The first signs of self-will must be carefully looked for, and plucked up by the roots at once before they had time to grow. Theobald picked up this numb serpent of a metaphor and cherished it in his bosom.

Before Ernest could well crawl he was taught to kneel; before he could well speak he was taught to lisp the Lord's prayer, and the general confession. How was it possible that these things could be taught too early? If his attention flagged or his memory failed him, here was an ill weed which would grow apace, unless it were plucked out immediately, and the only way to pluck it out was to whip him, or shut him up in a cupboard, or dock him of some of the small pleasures of childhood. Before he was three years old he could read and, and after a fashion, write. Before he was four he was learning Latin, and could do rule of three sums.¹⁰

¹⁰Samuel Butler, The Way of All Flesh, ed. James Cochane (New York: Viking Penguin, Inc., 1987), 117.

"Moral puritanism" was a factor that, combined with an economic motive, sanctioned the employment of children as laborers, which was considered a productive way to channel youthful energies. John Wesley, founder of Methodism, could state on seeing children working in a silk mill that he believed it was a worthy means of diverting children from the temptations of idleness.¹¹ Prior to Rousseau, certain philosophical movements proposed ideas which ran contrary to the prevailing religious doctrine. They were not, however, designed to refute contemporary opinion, as Rousseau did point by point, but were rather theoretical positions which had little pervasive impact. They did, nevertheless, help to pave the way for later theories and their proponents.

Locke proved influential in shaping his successor's thinking by providing alternatives to the Calvinist position. Locke's concern with the development of the adult was expounded in his Thoughts Concerning Education and Essay Concerning the Human Understanding. He posits that the child is a tabula rasa upon which experience, sensation, and education inscribe the youngster's maturation.

Let us then suppose the Mind to be, as we say,

¹¹Wesley, cited by Cruickshank, 2.

white Paper, void of all Characters without any Ideas. How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless Fancy of Man has painted on it, with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the materials of Reason and Knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, Experience.¹²

While Locke's position does not posit the child as born pure or spiritually sensitive, it does deny the child's inherently evil nature. The English philosopher places the origin of evil in the child's life experiences, preparing the ground Rousseau's argument that civilization has destructive influence. Locke himself shows little real interest in children, nor does he envision childhood as a special period distinct from adulthood; his concern is with the adult that the child ultimately becomes.

Given Locke's proposals, Rousseau's formulations follow readily, though later Dickens parodied Locke's rationalistic position in Hard Times, depicting Gradgrind's educational system as squelching imagination while championing facts:

Indeed, . . . he seemed a kind of cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts, and prepared to blow them clean out of the regions of childhood at one discharge. He seemed a galvanizing apparatus, too, charged with a grim mechanical substitute for the tender young imaginations

¹²John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, ed. and with an Introduction by Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 104.

that were to be stormed away.¹³

Rousseau's contribution with regard to children is two-fold. First, he asserted that childhood is a special period distinct from adulthood and deserving of special attention, and, second, he denied the concept of original sin and instead followed Locke who viewed the child as born innocent and devoid of malice in thought or deed. The first point--that childhood is distinct from adulthood--hardly seems revolutionary in this age which gives children toyshops, cartoons, and eighteen to twenty years to assume maturity; however, in Locke's day, children were rapidly indoctrinated into the adult world, dressed in the miniature apparel of grown-ups and expected to behave according to the costume.

A portrait by the painter Pierre-Narcisse Guerin of his daughter done in 1800 under the influence of David provides an example of the polished, artificial charm and grooming in a young girl. Beyond being an illustration of neoclassical symmetry and polish, the painting indicates an artificial maturity in a girl who is about six years old. Her hair is pulled tightly against her head with curls and tendrils delicately framing her face;

¹³Charles Dickens, Hard Times, with an Introduction by David Craig (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 48.

her nose has the pug cuteness of a little girl, while the lips and eyes seem sensuously made-up. Two delicate but large round earrings dangle elegantly above her bare, erect shoulders. This odd juxtaposition of adult and childlike qualities gives the little girl a haunting elegance and seems to endow her with a knowledge and even sensuality that far exceed her years.¹⁴

Similarly, yet in the opposite vein, the watercolor renderings collected by Susan Lasdun in her book Making Victorians: The Drummond's Children's World of 1827-1832 document traditional attitudes towards childhood and the correct attire for well-to-do children. The reformist zeal of Evangelical sects, of which the Drummond family were members, turned their puritanical gaze on children. Lasdun explains that pre-Victorian fashion was prurient. Apparel did not allow young children to bare even their arms, such dress was deemed "a preposterous and unsightly fashion."¹⁵ Clothing children in

¹⁴Pierre-Narcisse Guerin, Portrait of a Young Girl, oil on canvas, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Boulogne-sur-Mer. A reproduction of the portrait is found in Robert Rosenblum's art criticism which analyses the image of children in Romantic paintings: The Romantic Child: From Runge to Sendak (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1989), 41.

¹⁵Susan Lasdun, Making Victorians: The Drummond's Children's World 1827-1832 (London: Victor Gallancz Ltd., 1983), 68.

heavy fabrics and frilly white dresses inevitably restricted childish play.

Indeed a watercolor by one of the Drummond sisters depicts a young girl with her mother. Both have huge flounced hats, high V-shaped lace necklines, long billowing sleeves, tight-waisted pelisses, and delicate tear-dropped shaped skirts. The only distinction between the two is the skirt length which on the mother's dress extends to the floor while the daughter's comes to the calf and under it white lace pantaloons cover the girl's legs and ankles. The genteel adult attire evokes a decorous outward appearance meant to indicate an inner decorum. Thus whether depicted in the scanty, revealing fashions of the French classical styles of the early 1800s or the following generation's modest, constricting English attire, these examples reveal a desire to envelope childhood in the guise of adulthood and thereby deny childhood its own means of expression.¹⁶

¹⁶Ariès, in his study Centuries of Childhood, repeatedly documents pre nineteenth-century examples of paintings which show "the deformation which an artist at that time would inflict on children's bodies." (33) He continues, "A painter would not even hesitate to give the naked body of a child, in the very few cases when it was exposed, the musculature of an adult: thus in a Psalter dating from the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, Ishmael, shortly after birth, has the abdominal and pectoral muscles of a man. The thirteenth century, although it showed

Rousseau, as a champion of childhood, fights against this enforced maturity.

Nature wants children to be children before being men. If we want to pervert this order, we shall produce precocious fruits which will be immature and insipid and will not be long in rotting. . . . Childhood has ways of seeing, thinking, and feeling which are proper to it. Nothing is less sensible than to want to substitute ours for theirs.¹⁷

Further he claims that adults know nothing of childhood.

"The wisest men," he states,

concentrate on what it is most important for men to know without asking what children are in a condition to learn. They are always seeking the man in the child without thinking of what he is before being a man.¹⁸

Central in Emile is Rousseau's thesis that all education should appreciate the child's unique qualities. While acknowledging that children are born helpless and need guidance, he believes they should not be forced to conform to adult ideals, the majority of which he despised and believed stifled

more understanding in its presentation of childhood, remained faithful to this method. In St. Louis's moralizing Bible, children are depicted more often, but they are still indicated only by their size. In an episode in the life of Jacob, Isaac is shown sitting between his two wives, surrounded by some fifteen little men who come up to the level of the grown-ups' waists: these are their children." (33)

¹⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile; or On Education, trans. and with an Introduction by Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 90.

¹⁸Ibid., 33-34.

the child's natural appetites and skills. For Rousseau the child was not fallen; any deviation from virtue was a consequence of the environment, not the child's nature. He argues, "Let us set down as an incontestable maxim that the first movements of nature are always right. There is not a single vice to be found in it of which it cannot be said the how and whence it entered."¹⁹ Envisioning the soul of man as innately virtuous, and with social ills derived from departures from nature, he states, "Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man."²⁰ Rousseau, unlike his followers, does not argue that children are born with innate spiritual wisdom, he simply argues that they are born pure and free of sin.

Rousseau consecrated an image of the child as the embodiment of goodness in contrast with the Calvinist/Wesleyan position, creating a tension that characterizes the nineteenth-century's struggle to accept the emerging changes in the family hierarchy. The tension created by these conflicting positions is described by Grylls:

For when children are regarded mainly as

¹⁹Ibid., 92.

²⁰Ibid., 37.

miniature adults, no one can expect them to be cherished with particular care. But when they are studied and petted and admired, in some cases wept over and exalted as saints, the partial survival of brutality and disdain seems more indefensible. And this is the curious paradox, the chief distinguishing characteristic of Victorian parent-child relations: that within one society--sometimes within one particular person--tenderness and even cloying affection could co-exist with fierce discipline and a brooding suspicion of sin. Harshness to children had always existed; but seldom, as in the Victorian period, combined with curiosity and love.²¹

Given the evidence, it is clear that adult severity--with the now classic image of the stern father or headmaster brutalizing a helpless waif--was not unique to Victorian times. What was new was the change in attitude which came to view this behavior as cruel and domineering rather than just and appropriate.

Two consequences for literature that arose from Rousseau's educational doctrine were: first, the use of the child to symbolize innocence and, second, the recognition that the child's powerful imagination offered a legitimate and invigorating source of creative expression. Coveney, in his study of the image of childhood in nineteenth-century literature, asserts that Rousseau "more than any other created the climate in which Blake,

²¹Grylls, 23.

Wordsworth, Lamb, Southey, and Coleridge wrote," while acknowledging that Rousseau "wrote when there was already a growing predisposition to consider the 'Nature of Man' and 'Man in a state of Nature.'"²² The "discovery" of the child offered nineteenth-century writers new issues to explore and another way to emotionally engage an audience.

Throughout the century books were written not only about children but for them and were geared toward their sensibilities. While juvenile books in the early 1800s were didactic, the movement throughout the century was from instruction to entertainment. As the discovery of childhood progressed the emphasis shifted from facts and morals to boyish adventures and innocent fun.²³ Treasure Island and Kidnapped are unimaginable in previous centuries when children were not considered a worthy audience for serious art but, rather, if considered at all, were seen as receptacles for moral and religious instruction.

The freshness, imaginative impulses, and defenselessness of children provided authors with an

²²Coveney, 41.

²³For an analysis of English and American children's literature see Cornelia Meigs, A Critical History of Children's Literature: A Survey of Children's Books in English from Earliest Times to the Present (NY: The Macmillan Company, 1953).

untapped well-spring of emotional effect and symbolic power. Children could symbolize the extreme violation of the innocent human spirit, rendered as defenseless prey for the worst sins of the age: poverty, industrialization, the educational system, and class structures, among other social ills. No longer pictured simply as hungry mouths to be fed or as tiny hands clinging to mama's apron, children, their experiences, and musings were deemed a worthy subject for serious artistic exploration. The subject inspired artists and authors regardless of national border or aesthetic temperament. Employing youngsters for individual purposes, writers throughout the century achieved a variety of effects, ranging from Zola's sickly boy in The Sin of Father Mouret (1875) to Henry James's possessed boy in The Turn of the Screw (1898) and George Eliot's child-savior, Eppie, in Silas Marner (1861). The nineteenth-century view of the child evolved from patterns envisioned by early romantic poets, were popularized and sentimentalized by melodramatists, and subverted and transmuted by poetic dramatists as the century progressed.

Blake and Wordsworth were pioneers of the nineteenth century image of the child; they gave artistic expression to Rousseau's theoretical

positions. Blake, whose personal theology endowed all living things with a divine essence, denied original sin; instead he argued that the soul of man is divine and that the child, closer to its spiritual source than an adult, is born with brilliant spiritual instinct and power. By substituting original divinity for original sin, Blake, Coveney argues, was the first artist to give full expression to the concept of the spiritually sensitive child who would be central to the romantic imagination.²⁴

Songs of Innocence and Experience (1789), a collection of short poems and engravings, shows the new directions in which Blake took the child-image. This new vision encompasses the visionary potential of the child, the child's innate innocence, and the child's spiritual sensitivity. In the collection's first poem, by way of introduction, Blake assumes the role of piper, or artist-creator, who is inspired by a laughing child that appears on a cloud. First, the child asks him to compose a song about a lamb, a Christian symbol of gentleness and innocence which corresponds to certain child-symbols. The artist's first song brings tears to the child. The tender child then requests a

²⁴Coveney, 51.

cheerful song which makes him (or her; gender is never specified; it is as if an infant is androgynous) weep with joy. Finally, before vanishing, the child demands that the piper "sit thee down and write / In a book that all may read," inspiring the piper, who acknowledges "And I wrote my happy songs, / Every child may joy to hear."²⁵ In this introductory poem the child is the source of imaginative, creative energy that embodies the poetic spirit.

In Songs of Innocence Blake includes "Infant Joy," a two-stanza tribute to the divinely joyous moment of birth, as experienced by a babe. Only two days old and not yet christened, the child's consciousness cries out: "Joy is my name."²⁶ This brief outpouring of spontaneous happiness belongs aesthetically to the first half of the collection. But Blake was not so simplistic or sentimental as to focus solely on the joyful element in childhood. In Songs of Experience the child-image is no longer an angel on a cloud, here the allusion is to "a fiend hid in a cloud;"²⁷ and includes a two-stanza piece

²⁵William Blake, Songs of Innocence and Experience (New York: Orion Press, 1967), 4.

²⁶Ibid., 25.

²⁷Ibid., 48.

entitled "Infant Sorrow" that acknowledges the pain involved both in life-giving and growing.

My mother groand! my father wept.
Into the dangerous world I leapt.²⁸

Yet throughout Songs of Innocence and Experience

Blake offers lovingly sympathetic tributes to childhood, an early assertion of its significance as a poetic metaphor. Blake influenced the child-image in the nineteenth century through his identification of the child with innocence and divinity, helping to establish it in the visual and literary currency of the period as a representation of primal goodness and divinity.

Wordsworth, like Blake, envisions childhood as a period of acute spiritual and creative insight. Again the Romantic desire to integrate the liberating qualities of childhood with the more restrictive nature of the adult is identifiable in his poetic images and philosophy. Wordsworth champions childhood in his assertion that "The child is father to the man."²⁹ Prefiguring Freud and modern psychoanalysis, the British poet views the adult personality as shaped by the nature and

²⁸Ibid., 48.

²⁹William Wordsworth, "The Rainbow," collected in Home at Grasmere: Extracts from the Journal of Dorothy Wordsworth and From the Poems of William Wordsworth (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 188.

experiences of childhood in major works such as The Prelude, the Ode on "Intimations of Immortality," and "The Rainbow." In their poetry Blake and Wordsworth articulate what becomes a recurrent artistic image: the child as the incarnation of innocence. Moreover, both proved instrumental in heralding the new romantic image of children, which rapidly caught the imaginations of the best and worst writers of the period.

Children for centuries prior to the nineteenth century were negligently relegated to a position in which they were best "seen but not heard." Yet, while Rousseau, Blake, Wordsworth, and other lesser writers contributed significantly to the centrality of the child in literature, they cannot be credited with having originated a new conception of the child, unlike anything envisioned before the romantic revolution. Indeed, George Boas in his book The Cult of Childhood documents numerous manifestations in artistic form of the uncorrupted child of nature, including those found in Hebrew and Christian literature and in Italian Renaissance painting and sculpture.³⁰ Jung, as well, explores the child-archetype, describing recurrent cultural

³⁰George Boas, The Cult of Childhood (London: Wargurg Institute, 1966), 48.

manifestations of the child-god and what that archetype reveals of the human psyche.³¹

It can be argued that the vitality of the child-image as it grew in the nineteenth-century was not simply due to the power and vitality of Blake and Wordsworth's poetic genius nor to renewed interest in a neglected artistic image. Nineteenth-century writers and thinkers are obsessed with maintaining and asserting a primal innocence, particularly while confronting social realities and scientific revolutions that continually seem to deny that innocence. In The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama and the Mode of Excess, Peter Brooks perceptively reveals the decay of a fixed system of values and religious symbols throughout the period and their replacement by what he terms "the moral occult"³²--secular images with moral or religious value affixed to them. I would assert that because the image of the child is flexible, adults have shaped it to suit their needs. Thus, in lieu of Adam and Eve, childhood became the

³¹Carl Jung, "The Special Phenomenology of the Child Archetype," collected in Psyche and Symbol: A Selection from the Writings of C.G. Jung, edited by Violets de Laszlo (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1958), 120.

³²Brooks, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 5.

code adopted to embody both primal purity and spiritual wisdom, becoming a symbol that could assert man's innate goodness and godliness.

In a nineteenth-century, pre-Freudian universe the child was a sexless, spiritually sensitive, angelic vessel lately come from God. Adults, self-consciously preoccupied with their own corruption, promoted the child as their means for salvation. The child was consequently endowed with an exaggerated ability to purify the tainted adult. As traditional sacred iconography was depleted of its validity and vitality, a secondary, secular set of images blossomed and supplanted the old images, bestowing new energy on concepts decaying in their traditional form.

The spiritually sensitive, victimized child of the nineteenth century contrasts with the twentieth-century vision which boasts the demonic child who, in fact, acts as a victimizer. In the nineteenth century there existed a need to find purity and goodness at the root of human nature; by asserting an identifiable phase of being which was uncontaminated, they could promote a belief in man's primal, basic goodness. In the twentieth century, as evidenced in works ranging from the artistically masterful Lord of the Flies (1954) to popular horror

fiction such as Rosemary's Baby, The Omen, and The Exorcist, a popular literary concept of childhood began to link the child with the devil.

In Corruption in Paradise Reinhard Kuhn

identifies the modern treatment of children as a

disquieting blend of innocence and corruption that leads to the worst of perversions . . . [children are] instruments of a higher and sinister force. Today, their innumerable progeny have captured the popular imagination and continue to multiply. Since the success of William March's The Bad Seed (1951), in which a ten-year-old murderess triumphantly survives her mother's attempt to rid the world of her, authors have cynically exploited the demonic child, in whom they have found an almost certain vehicle for instant success. . . [March's] sweetly vicious protagonist is an original contribution to the literature dealing with a very specific type of menacing child, the cursed youngster who by the fact of his childhood is by definition evil.³³

Popular film and literature have continued to exploit the thrill of depicting the demure, sweet, goldilocked toddler who incarnates evil. As with the sensation of seeing the angelic child die and ascend to heaven, a thrill results from witnessing the reversal of the child-icon.

To a large degree the twentieth-century's use of the demonic child is built on the nineteenth-century concept of the child-angel. The shock value of the twentieth-century image, which shows not only the brutal savagery of human nature in its early

³³Kuhn, 40.

essence such as in Lord of the Flies but also establishes children as the incarnation not of God but the Devil, rests on the nineteenth-century tradition of children as living angels. In the twentieth-century some writers begin to invert the nineteenth-century notion of childhood by showing the child as the devil incarnate. Of course, the contemporary reversal has shock value, but the demonic child also reifies a world view which no longer finds purity in the roots of humanity, rather it finds its opposite. This is not the forum to discuss the psychosis of the twentieth-century, but a comparison of the nineteenth and twentieth-century child-images reveals the unique power and influence the nineteenth-century child-image contained.

Children, nevertheless, make their way into twentieth-century works in ways that correspond, though distorted by modern aesthetics, to nineteenth-century imagistic patterns. Edward Bond uses children in many of his works, among them Lear, Narrow Road to the North, and Saved. In Saved an infant functions in melodramatic ways: the helpless child victimized by parents and society; disembodied wailing a provocative reminder of the child's presence; and the strange otherworldly dimension the child adds to the stage. But Bond, despite showing

some of the most vicious acts imaginable onstage, as when a gang of London youths taunt and then stone a young infant as it rests in a pram, avoids the unlimited potential for pathos inherent in such a senselessly aggressive act. There is no appeal to tears nor does Bond build sensationally to a violent climax. This scene falls well within the middle of the work and almost seems irrelevant to the lives of the central characters, one of whom is the baby's mother.

Indeed, Pam, the mother, tells her lover and the child's probable father, after he has been arrested for the child's murder, that "I ain't blamin' yer."³⁴ She is motivated solely to get her lover back; no one in the play seems to notice the child's absence, only the audience might note that the incessant wailing has stopped. While the moment of child murder is horrifying and shocking, it is not pathetic. Bond is more interested in exploring, with striking theatrical moments and characters, the dehumanizing forces that infect humanity and accordingly the play was banned, having outraged the audience, whereas in the nineteenth century child death produced voluptuous tears. Bond perceives the

³⁴Edward Bond, "Saved," collected in Plays: One (London: Methuen, 1977), 83.

child murder in Saved as a "dramatic metaphor" for the way children are "battered" by "the weight of aggression in our society."³⁵ His avoidance of pathos focuses attention on the social issues. Thus, Bond's goal and direction are characteristic of twentieth-century aesthetics.

Samuel Beckett's Waiting for Godot (1954) incorporates a child who acts as an emissary from Godot. However, Beckett introduces levels of ambiguity which are distinct from the absolute values and images found in nineteenth-century drama. The boy, who arrives each evening, may have been there before, may be there tomorrow, may be their link to salvation, but may not be any of these either. This boy, while having little of the unqualified redemptive power of a transcendent child of the nineteenth century, seems to offer an element of hope to Vladimir and Estragon; and yet, he may be responsible for prolonging a futile endeavor. Thus the child, while endowed with some of the values of the nineteenth-century child character, is an ambiguous vessel of hope.

From Divine Words (1913) to The Tin Drum (1959)

³⁵Edward Bond, Lear (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), "Author's Preface," viii.

and Eraser Head (1978),³⁶ the twentieth century has perfected the grotesque-child used to merge pathos and revulsion. Again correspondences exist with nineteenth-century children, notably the pathetic wailing (in these examples it is a strange, non-human sound) of the victimized child. Ramon Maria del Valle-Inclán's Divine Words offers an example from dramatic literature of a gruesomely pathetic child who is repeatedly abused by members of his family. His drunken mother has carted the deformed boy to fairs where she begs. After her death the relatives haggle over the boy, seeing him as a tremendous financial resource. Again he is dragged across the countryside as his current caretaker Mary Gaila begs for alms. The freak is neglected until, when he is given too much alcohol, he has a deadly seizure. Mary Gaila, not wanting to spend any money on a burial leaves the body in her sister-in-law's garden in the middle of the night. In the morning pigs are found feasting on the boy's face. Returned to Mary Gaila, the gnarled body is carted to the church step in an attempt to solicit money for a

³⁶Ramon del Valle-Inclán, Divine Words: A Village Tragi-Comedy, trans. Trader Faulkner (London: Heinemann, 1977), Gunter Grass, The Tin Drum, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1967), and David Lynch, Eraserhead, released by Libra Films, 1978.

burial. The indignities and injustices the boy suffers are not significantly worse than those of children in nineteenth-century drama. It is his body which differs, instead of being a golden haired, pug-nosed cutie, he is hideously deformed and retarded. The grotesque twist is, like the midget mute in The Tin Drum or the mutant infant in Eraser Head, not the brutalized innocence of the nineteenth century but the manifestation of a distorted, deformed world. However, in the nineteenth century, as will be elaborated, the child was a beautiful image of innocence and divinity and asserted man's origins in a blessedly pure and beautiful state.

CHAPTER 3

THE MELODRAMATIC CHILD: THE EARLY IMAGE

Throughout the nineteenth century an increase in industrial mechanization, social instability, and urbanization occurred which manifested a growing sense of human insignificance and created a melodramatic aesthetic. Industrialization caused shifts in the social structure with the urban population rapidly increasing. The migration and unemployment resulting from the industrial revolution engendered instability and fear, particularly for those most vulnerable to poverty's grip. On another level the events in France, from the Revolution to the Terror, led to the decimation of traditionally sacrosanct hierarchies, creating social and political volatility and paranoia. The anxiety resulting from these burgeoning social issues produced an appetite for a literary mode which could give voice to unyielding fears. Melodrama grew in response, giving the nineteenth century its title "the Age of Melodrama."

In melodrama's ever increasing need for sources and effects, this dynamic genre rapidly assimilated

technological developments, current events, and literary trends; it was through melodrama that the child first prolifically emerged onto the nineteenth-century stage as a significant character. The child met the genre's need for emblematic characters, providing quick visual summaries of moral positions.¹

Children suited the needs of melodramatists in various capacities, certainly as victims but in other more complex forms as well. For writers seeking to provide emotional thrills for audiences, the child could evoke a range of sensations from pity and fear to spiritual joy. Melodrama, avoiding the complexities and spirit of the romantic poets, enfranchised the more simplistic dimensions of the child-image. Even writers with sophisticated thematic or artistic goals, such as Byron and Shelley, used a conventionalized code established in melodrama. This chapter will delineate the types of child characters, their functions, and their place in the melodramatic universe.

THE EMOTIONAL APPEAL OF THE CHILD

The most obvious use of the child in

¹Michael Booth, English Melodrama (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1965), 33.

nineteenth-century melodrama was to elicit a powerful emotional response. Adult characters were primary to the plot and more fully realized while children were most often assigned an ancillary position, functioning where they could tug at the heartstrings. Even when a child appeared as a central character, as in Oliver Twist, an adult, in this case Nancy, emerged as the principal hero.² Melodrama utilized every available trick to incite emotions, and the child was easily employed to such an end.

One of the most striking examples of a child employed to heighten emotional tension may be found in George L. Aiken's dramatic adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel Uncle Tom's Cabin (1852)³. Young Harry functions in the second of the play's two intersecting narratives: the flight north of his parents George and Eliza and, eventually, their

²George Almer, Oliver Twist, a dramatic adaptation of the novel by Charles Dickens (New York Public Library Main Reading, prompt script). After running through cases of Oliver's early abuse, Nancy's plight becomes the dramatic focus.

³The novel, written in 1851, was adapted for the stage by Aiken, a young actor and member of the Howard family theatre company. Originally two separate plays, it was soon combined into a single six-act work and ran successfully at the Troy Museum Theatre in Troy, New York. Daniel Gerould, "The Americanization of Melodrama," American Melodrama (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1983), 15.

escape. Stowe and her adaptor Aiken demonstrate the brutal destructiveness of slavery as it breaks family bonds: George, a slave on a neighboring farm, is being threatened with separation from his wife, a slave on the Shelby farm.

GEORGE: Well, lately my master has been saying that he was a fool to let me marry off the place--that he hates Mr. Shelby and all his tribe--and he says he won't let me come here any more, and that I shall take a wife and settle down on his place.

ELIZA: But you were married to me by the minister, as much as if you had been a white man.

GEORGE: Don't you know I can't hold you for my wife if he chooses to part us? That is why I wish I'd never seen you--it would have been better for us both--it would have been better for our poor child if he had never been born.⁴

George accurately senses the future, for the Shelby farm is suffering financially and several slaves must be sold to raise money.

Eliza witnesses her son charming the slave trader Haley with a song and dance and suspects the negotiations which are unfolding. Consequently, she determines to follow George in his escape, taking

⁴George L. Aiken, Uncle Tom's Cabin, a dramatic adaptation of the novel by Harriet Beecher Stowe, collected in American Melodrama, ed. and with an Introduction by Daniel Gerould (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1983), 78.

their young son with her. Harry is thus the catalyst for the escape and the ensuing travails, yet his plight and struggle are peripheral; the locus of pathos and concern is Eliza. The child heightens only the mother's struggle and highlights her maternal goodness.

In escaping, Eliza must cross the ice-covered Ohio River, carrying her young boy, while the two are pursued by slave traders and their hounds. The stage history of Uncle Tom's Cabin spans decades and reference to later stage versions reveals the function of the child onstage. During this fast-paced chase scene, the visual and emotional focus remains Eliza; her infant is completely devoid of personality, a point substantiated by the fact that in the Thomas version the actress carried not a child but a blanket wrapped around meat to excite the pursuing dogs who jumped at her tiny bundle.⁵ This suspenseful staging technique is evidence that stage adapters were not, in this instance, interested in exploring the effect of slavery on the child, as with *Topsy*, but rather in heightening the

⁵Glenn Loney, "Setting the Nineteenth-Century Stage Uncle Tom's Cabin: From New York Theatres to "Tom Shows" In Town Halls and Tents," collected in Showcasing American Drama: George L. Aiken/H. B. Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, ed. Vera Jiji (Brooklyn, NY: Multimedia Studies in American Drama Humanities Institute, 1983), 8.

melodramatic pathos and excitement of the situation through a sensational scene. The child's role becomes purely theatrical, extending the potential for fear and pathos.

John Walker's The Factory Lad (1832) is different from other melodramas in its radical politics and abrupt ending,⁶ nevertheless the children heighten the plight of the adults, particularly the father. As the play begins, men are being turned out of their jobs, replaced by steam-operated machines. The threat extends beyond individuals, encompassing the entire family, for as the down-trodden Rushton tells the others:

⁶See Robert Estill, "The Factory Lad: Melodrama as Propaganda," Theatre Quarterly v.1, no. 4 (October-December, 1971): 22-26. Estill writes:

In this play the "villain" Westwood is an employer with fashionable arguments for his actions and even feelings of real loss when his factory is burnt down--and the ambiguous ending makes it by no means certain that the "virtuous" workers will win.

It is a tautly written play, with none of the comic relief characteristic of other melodrama, and the minimum of dialogue necessary to establish situation, character and plot. Yet it manages to cover a wide range of social topics--mechanization and the new industrial capitalists, the Poor Law system and corruption within it, the use of the law to protect the rich, the gaming laws, and emigration. In fact the play stands up well to examination as a propaganda piece, aimed to encourage working-class indignation and militancy. Many of its speeches, indeed, bear a strong likeness to statements in the Poor Man's Guardian, though nothing has yet been found to connect John Walker with radical politics. (23)

after begging and telling them what they know to be the truth--that you have a wife and five, six, or eight children, one perhaps just born, another mayhap just dying--they'll give you eighteen pence to support them all for the week.⁷

To reveal the larger implications of the hero George Allen losing his job and to increase audience sympathy for his hero's plight, Walker incorporates domestic scenes and characters. Before Allen returns home, his loving wife Jane, his two daughters, Mary and Milly, and a baby in the cradle are gathered around the fireplace, preparing Allen's dinner. When Allen enters, having just been turned out of the factory, he lashes out at his daughter who cries, "Oh, mother--mother, father's thrown down all my work and has stamped on it, and I'm sure it's done very well!"⁸ Witnessing his child's fear quiets him and his love surfaces, revealing his natural compassion.

Soon Allen is persuaded to join the other militant workers when they burn the factory. Westwood, the factory owner, and his men pursue the workers after their rebellion, forcing Allen to return home in order to give Jane money and say a

⁷John Walker, The Factory Lad, collected in English Plays of the Nineteenth Century: Dramas 1800-1850, ed. by Michael Booth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 211.

⁸Ibid.

quick goodbye. While there he is momentarily confronted by Westwood and his men who seize him. As Jane kneels to plead for mercy, Mary and Milly each appeal: "Oh, spare my father!" "Don't hurt father!"⁹ A fastpaced reversal allows Allen to escape, yet after fleeing, he remains obsessed with his family, eliciting audience sympathy as he cries, "Where shall I fly? My brain is giddy, my legs feeble. I can no further. Oh, my wife--Jane, Jane--my children, too!"¹⁰ When Allen meets the other men, he immediately asks, "Have you seen my wife--my children?"¹¹ After Allen leaves his home, Jane follows him with Mary pursuing her. Eventually, Allen is seized by his pursuers in a cave; Jane, who has witnessed the act, faints only to be revived by her young daughter.

Mother, mother, where are you? Oh, what do I see on the cold ground? It cant' be mother? Mother! [Approaches nearer.] Mother! Oh, it cant be my mother--she would hear me--yet it looks like my mother! Oh, dear, it is, I know it can be no other! Mother, mother! [Cries and falls on her mother.] Mother, why don't you speak? Mother! [Kneels and kisses her.]¹²

Together they follow the men to the prison to

⁹Ibid., 226.

¹⁰Ibid., 228.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., 230

continue their appeal. Even after his capture, during his trial, Allen remains preoccupied with his family. His loyalty is equalled by his wife's who vows, "Never, never shall they part us."¹³

It is the family unit, not the children, which is victimized by the lay-offs at the factory. Of course, the potential for the children's suffering could eventually be great but Mary and the other children are never threatened by any immediate physical pain. The children remain peripheral yet are indispensable as they intensify the play's emotional current.

Beyond their presence onstage, the child could be abstracted by writers and invoked in completely symbolic form. Once children had captured the public imagination, they could easily be employed to denote certain ideas without walking across the stage. Indeed, the child-symbol could be more liberating than the child's corporeal presence which brought with it certain visual and emotional constraints. Poetic writers found the child-symbol an effective emotional device as well, and while even more greatly abstracted, the child-symbol remained an effective theatrical instrument. Although Byron's Cain (1821) and Stone's Metamora

¹³Ibid.

(1829) are more traditionally neoclassical in form and neither is confined to purely melodramatic characteristics, certain similarities with the genre are inherent: the polarities of good and evil; the victimization of the good-hearted father by an unrelenting villain; and pathetic emotional appeals.

In Cain George Gordon, Lord Byron, secularizes the religious and mythic dimension of this Biblical story, representing Cain as the heroic challenger struggling against what he perceives as God's irrationality. As characteristic of the nineteenth century, good and evil are polarized with Lucifer and Cain opposing God and Abel, but Byron poses metaphysical ambiguities which deny the clear parallel of God with goodness and Lucifer with evil, thus denying traditional assumptions of good and evil and of God's absolute goodness. Indeed God is transformed into an omnipotent tyrant more closely aligned with a melodramatic villain than hero. Questioning the distinctions between good and evil and who is to judge--questioning even God's ability to judge in such matters--Cain, like other archetypic characters such as Prometheus and Lucifer, sympathizes with human misery and challenges the necessity for it.

As the son of Adam and Eve, Cain cannot know

the experience of death but is preoccupied with it while searching for human, not spiritual fulfillment. Adding to Cain's resentment of humanity's suffering is the fact that he is a father; he thus feels responsible for extending and bequeathing this suffering for not only will the next generation have to struggle through their own misery but they will inherit the burden of the previous generation's sin. Cain expresses his bitter concern to his wife Adah, arguing:

'Twere better that he ceased to live, than give
 Life to so much sorrow as he must
 Endure, and, harder still, bequeath; but since
 That saying jars you, let us only say--
 'Twere better that he never had been born.¹⁴

The infant encapsulates the concept of the child as the recipient of suffering, the innocent inheritor of sin he cannot comprehend. While many nineteenth-century writers rushed children to an early grave, Byron conceives of the child as not only better off dead but preferably unborn, a melancholic twist on a conventional image. Although only briefly used, the child-image is invested with effective emotional and symbolic importance.

Similarly, Stone's Metamora, or the Last of the

¹⁴Lord Byron, Cain: Twelve Essays and a Text with Variants and Annotations, ed. by Truman Guy Stefan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 235.

Wampanoags finds a function for the child-symbol, with the child representing the final hope for the regeneration and continuation of the fictive Indian tribe the Wampanoags. As in Cain, the father, the tribal chief Metamora, rather than the child is the major source for audience sympathy. Thematically, Metamora has parallels with J. Fenimore Cooper's The Last of the Mohicans (1826), ultimately, having been betrayed repeatedly and tragically by white settlers and traders, Metamora's tribe faces extinction. When facing their final stand against the settlers the Wampanoags are overwhelmed by the military forces. Finally, Metamora finds his wife Nahmeokee resting by a rock precipice. Their child lies under a tree. When Metamora asks to see his "little one," Nahmeokee draws back the furs which covered it, revealing his lifeless body. As in Cain, the father finds the benefit in his child's death, "Well, is he not happy? Better to die by the stranger's hand than live his slave."¹⁵ Then the Wampanoag chief conjures up a spiritual image which evokes the tableau vivants that are later seen in East Lynne and Uncle Tom's Cabin:

¹⁵John Augustus Stone, Metamora, or the Last of the Wampanoags, collected in Representative Plays by American Dramatists, ed. by Montrose Moses (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1921), 225.

Nahmeokee, I look up through the long path of thin air, and I think I see our infant borne onward to the land of the happy, where the fair hunting grounds know no storms or snows, and where the immortal braves feast in the eyes of the giver of good.¹⁶

Although the play is awkwardly phrased and overwritten, thus limiting its effectiveness, the child's death highlights the hero-father's suffering and serves as a metaphor for the tribe's annihilation. Representing futurity and potential, the child's demise ultimately means finality and extinction; the play pivots on the movement from possibility to extinction as *Metamora's* tribe suffers irreversible defeat.

In the above examples the children are not central characters; however, by introducing a corporeal child or a child-symbol, writers powerfully extend the dimension of the work, particularly the emotional dimension. Despite the child's ability to convey pathos, writers could avoid sheer emotionality, and also represent complex ideas. In *Metamora*, for example, the infant's dead body serves to elicit tremendous reserves of pathos, but Stone, while incorporating short-term emotional aims, also utilizes the child's murder to symbolize the devastation of the tribe; not only is the child

¹⁶Ibid., 226.

murdered but all hope is destroyed. The child offered dramatists a versatile image able, depending on the author's intent, to affect the emotional tension of a work while encompassing more complex dimensions.

Nineteenth-century playwrights recognized that adding a child to the stage would delight, intrigue, and emotionally engage an audience. A playwright, when selecting aural and visual signs, generally senses their potential for eliciting sympathy, amusement, and fear. Nineteenth-century dramatists found a child's presence could provide a quick and immediate tug at their audience's heartstrings. Thus even when focusing on adult characters and their moral crises, children offered playwrights a means to subtly or blatantly add to the emotional and theatrical dimension of work.

THE IMAGE OF CHILDREN IN MELODRAMA

Children are incorporated into innumerable melodramas in order to exploit their capacity to increase emotional tension; indeed, the above examples are impressive in their fairly sophisticated handling of such highly volatile emotional moments. However, child characters are more vital and interesting in other melodramas. As

writers promoted the sensational and superficial dimensions of the romantic child-image, melodramatists created emblematic child characters who became prototypes for the century: the child victim, the lost child, and the transcendent child.

The Child as Victim

The domain of childhood is a special realm which operates by principles that are difficult and sometimes impossible for adults to decipher. The converse also holds true; the world that adults have created operates by forces and laws that are alien to the child's nature. Because children are not innately equipped with aptitudes or skills to assert themselves in their struggle to survive in a mysterious adult world, the family is meant to provide acceptable protection from society's ills and to offer guidance for operating in this unknown realm. But when a child is set adrift, alone, without an adult guide, through being orphaned or as a result of any other form of estrangement from the family, the child's life becomes a struggle for survival and comprehension.

The most forceful creator of the helpless child battling a malevolent adult world is Charles Dickens. A persistent and influential champion of

the young, his juvenile heroes include Pip, Oliver Twist, Little Nell, Tiny Tim, and less fortunate youths like Smike and the Artful Dodger. In his novels Dickens sends his literary children along a path filled with terror, fantasy, melodramatic tension, and death as they struggle to maintain their natural integrity in a world which insidiously undermines their naively gentle instincts.

Consequently, he provides the historian of the fictional child with quintessential examples of the types of nineteenth-century literary youths and their travails.

Dickens exerted a powerful influence on the popular imagination and consequently the popular depiction of the nineteenth-century child. Moreover, through the adaptations which were rapidly transcribed for the stage from his serialized novels, often even before the story had been published in toto, Dickens influenced the depiction of the stage child.¹⁷ Indeed his visual language,

¹⁷Crozier, in his dissertation, 76, arrives at a similar conclusion. He writes, "it seems likely that dramatizations of Dickens, like film adaptations of other novelists in more recent times, reached a far wider public than did the original books. In the case of children and the images of them which were characteristic of Victorian society, stage versions of Dickens's children were probably those with which the majority of people, especially among the poorer classes, were familiar."

dramatic situations, and colorful characterizations allow the works to be easily and successfully translated onto the stage. His way of depicting juvenile emotions idealizes the child's innocence while indulging his audience's emotions. Consequently, while the stage adaptations often were haphazardly constructed, their sheer quantity and audience appeal meant that Dickens, not as a stage writer himself, but through the medium of stage adaptation, produced many popular stage-children.

In his novels Dickens artfully combines thrilling narrative with an attack on social corruption; however, in the hands of his sensationalist adapters, the social commentary is blithely disregarded in order to focus on the pathos of a situation. Thus on stage, the dramatic center typically becomes the pathos of the child-victim who is beset by specific villainous individuals in contrast to the polarity customarily found in the novels, that of an hostile environment which callously abuses and destroys an child's body and psyche.¹⁸

¹⁸George Rowell, The Victorian Theatre 1792-1914: A Survey, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978). Rowell describes the stage adaptations: "Shorn of much of their humor and all their original observation, Dickens's novels emerged on the Victorian stage as melodramas, crude, sensational--and tremendously successful. (5i)

Oliver Twist (1837) is an excellent example, first because of its popularity and centrality in shaping a sentimental image of the victimized child, and also because of its proven adaptability and appeal in other media, among them musical drama, film, and theatre.¹⁹ Although this work is undeniably one of Dickens's most sentimental,

¹⁹Indeed, Dickens himself recognized the potential of Oliver Twist for the stage. He attempted to preempt the inevitable unauthorized adaptations by negotiating individually with respectable actor-managers, first Frederick Yates and later William Macready. In 1838 before completing Oliver Twist, Dickens wrote the following to Yates:

Supposing we arrange preliminaries for our mutual satisfaction, I propose to dramatize "Oliver Twist" for the first night of next season. I have never seen Mrs. Honner, but from the mere circumstance of her being a Mrs., I should say at once that she was "a many sizes too big" for Oliver Twist. If it be played by a female it should be a very sharp girl of 13 or 14, or the character would be an absurdity. I don't see any possibility of any other house doing before your next opening night. If they do, it must be done in a very extraordinary manner, as the story, unlike that of "Pickwick," is an involved and complicated one. I am quite certain that no one can have heard what I am going to do with the different characters in the end, inasmuch as, at present, I don't quite know myself. So we are tolerably safe on that head. I am quite certain that your name as the Jew and mine as the author would knock any other attempt quite out of the field.

Neither manager accepted the project. Dickens, quoted by Alexander Woollcott, Mr. Dickens Goes to the Play (Alexander Woollcott, 1922; reissued by Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1967), 228. See also F. Dubrez Fawcett, Dickens the Dramatist: On Stage, Screen, and Radio (London: W. H. Allen, 1952) for a detailed history of stage and screen adaptations of Dickens's novels.

incisive social criticism surrounds the story of this helpless boy. But Oliver Twist also provides highly theatrical situations and characterizations that, stripped of their social context, become pure melodrama. Consequently, in the hands of a hack, the melodramatic thrills become the focal point as the most sensational scenes are linked together with scanty transitions and the characters' multifacetedness is reduced.

In the novel, the infant hero Oliver Twist is, from the moment of his birth, abandoned to the poorhouse. Allegedly, he will be nurtured by the public institutions designed to care for orphans, but in fact the system is responsible for his victimization. Farmed out to a workhouse, he lives close to starvation until at nine years of age he is indentured to a parochial undertaker. Surrounded by coffins, his need to free himself from the suffocating atmosphere of death leads him to escape, sending him along the road to London. But here, rather than relief, he finds an urban hell where the diabolical Fagin controls an underworld of thieves and cutthroats.

While the first nine years of Oliver's life are filled with unmitigated physical suffering, his physical needs are met by the London gang. Fagin

practices a far more insidious form of abuse as he attempts to morally corrupt his young ward by turning his gentle spirit into a criminal one. Eventually, Oliver escapes this brutal world but he is again captured and returned to hell until beneficent adult forces in the persons of Mrs. Maylie and Mr. Brownlow join together, in lieu of mother and father, to provide the youth protection and to destroy Fagin.

An 1862 play version of Oliver Twist by George Almar²⁰ typifies the dramaturgical shoddiness that compresses characters and events in order to focus on pathos and to meet the exigencies of production demands (to which Dickens himself pays comic tribute in Nicholas Nickleby). Almar begins with a framing device which immediately introduces Fagin who serves initially as narrator, recounting Oliver's mother's travails to his cronies in the Three Cripples bar.

²⁰Several unauthorized adaptations preceded Almar's stage version which premiered on November 19, 1838 at the Surrey Theatre. Earlier versions such as those by Edward Stirling and J. S. Coyne were mounted before the completion of the novel in October 1838. Almar was the first to be able to include the scene depicting Bill Sikes's murder of Nancy. Almar's version was one of the few to feature a boy, Master George Owen, in the role of Oliver. Another noteworthy feature of the production is the fact that Dickens attended the Surrey show, but evidently was horrified by what he saw there and spent the evening lying prostrate in a corner until the act-curtain fell. Fawcett, 54-55.

Monks is also introduced in this scene as is his familial connection with Oliver, establishing at the outset what becomes clear only late in the novel. Thus, rather than the journey that Dickens sets Oliver on where the child struggles to escape a malicious environment, the adaptor makes Oliver a helpless child beset by an identifiable gang of villains, negating the work's nebulous web of dehumanizing social forces responsible for attacking the child's sensitive nature.

Scene 2 shifts to a scene early in the novel which includes Bumble and Mrs. Corney and lifts the dialogue directly from the original. This scene compresses various aspects of Oliver's early exploitation, combining the terrorizing interview by the workhouse board immediately with his famous plea for more gruel. The adaptor focuses on providing exposition while eliminating the intervening scenes of institutional corruption and exploitation. Sikes then enters disguised as a chimney sweep while Bumble and Mrs. Corney are given the lines of the review board as they barter over the terms of Oliver's release. Again the condensation of scenes and characters extracts Dickens's story in order to elicit a moment of pathos while it bypasses the thematic import of the novel. The scene's final

tableau emphasizes Oliver's helplessness as Burns, the magistrate, provides a glimmer of compassion to which Oliver responds by kneeling, kissing the man's hand, and crying, "Heaven bless you, sir, and reward your kindness to a poor friendless orphan,"²¹ underscored by appropriately pathetic music.

Act 1 ends on an equally pathetic note as Oliver decides to escape. Locked in a closet, he has his first significant moment with the audience--until now the adults have dominated the stage as well as the boy. The language leaves Dickens's behind and assumes a stagy tragic rhythm as Oliver moans, "The feelings that struggle in my breast while they were here can now have vent. . . . It is a cold night--the moon shines bright and clear. I will away at once. Why should I delay? They will return, and all hope will be lost!"²²

Act II begins with Oliver, tattered and bedraggled, entering London and encountering the Artful Dodger, whom the adaptor makes a combination of the laughing brat Charley and the crafty Dodger. Dodger leads him back to Fagin's child-infested lair where he is given a glass of brandy and then sent out for a lesson in pickpocketing. His ineptitude

²¹Almer, 17.

²²Ibid., 20.

serves him well for he ends in Brownlow's home where, for the first time, he is given love and protection. Dickens's dialogue is transcribed but trimmed, with little time devoted to Oliver's escape from "hell" as he is quickly returned to the underworld. Sent on an errand by Brownlow, he is recaptured when Sikes's partner Nancy pretends to be his sister from whom the boy has run away. With the introduction of Nancy, Oliver is given a protector as well as a companion victim. Oliver is returned to criminal life when Sikes places him through a window to open the doors for the thieves. On this occasion Oliver is shot (again to the appropriate musical accompaniment) after which a chase scene ensues with Sikes, who carries the wounded boy, pursued by the household servants on whom he turns and fires.

Among the subsequent scenes that are dramatized are the most sensational episodes in the novel. After his wounding, Oliver fades into the background as Nancy's persecution comes to the fore until her murder at Sikes's hands.²³ Monks's relationship to

²³The role of Nancy often dominated stage adaptations and featured celebrated performers. The murder scene, which included Sikes dragging Nancy around the room by her hair to the boos and hisses of the audience, became the climax of many stage versions. The first important United States production in February, 1839 featured Charlotte

Oliver--as a half brother with whom the former must share his father's inheritance--is quickly passed over, making what in the novel is the most tenuous and awkwardly implausible point a perfectly standard resolution in this purely melodramatic adaptation. The inheritance provides the young boy with the financial means necessary to enter respectable society after his adult protectors vanquish his villainous persecutors.

Dickens's use of sentiment and exciting narrative evoke the grotesque malevolence of a world which cruelly attacks youthful naivete and criticizes the status quo. Melodramatists, however, found in Dickens' creations innumerable pathetic children who were perfect for dramatizing heartrending moments of extreme victimization.

Unlike this second-rate adaptation of *Oliver Twist*, George Lander's version of The Old Curiosity Shop successfully turns Dickens' novel into a tearjerking play.²⁴ The novel, larger in scope than the play, abounds with neglected, abused, and doomed children. By contrast, Lander focuses on a small

Cushman, a role in which she made a sensation. Fawcett, 56.

²⁴Lander later dramatized Bleak House, featuring another of Dickens's ragged waifs Jo, entitled Bleak House, or Poor "Jo". Fawcett, 91.

cast of characters: Nell, her grandfather, Kit, Quilp, and his lackeys. Aided by two accomplices, Quilp becomes the single villain, a small but menacing presence. As described by Kit, he is "an uglier dwarf than can be seen anywhere for a penny."²⁵ He terrorizes and brutalizes his wife as well as ruins and casts out Nell and her grandfather.

An aspect of adult tyranny that Lander takes from the novel is Quilp's sexual attraction for the child Nell. When Nell arrives at Quilp's house, bringing a message from her grandfather, she talks first to Mrs. Quilp, another young victim of this diminutive monster. Quilp surprises Nell, popping out from behind the doorway. Looking her over, he asks:

QUILP: How should you like to be my number two, little Nell?

NELL: What, sir?

QUILP: My number two. My Mrs. Quilp the second, when Mrs. Quilp number one is dead.

MRS. QUILP: Quilp.

QUILP: (pinching her) Hold your clatter. There's a prospect for you; to be my wife by-and-bye, my little cherry cheeked red lipped wife. Say that

²⁵George Lander, The Old Curiosity Shop, dramatic adaptation of the novel by Charles Dickens (London: John Dicks Press, 1883), 4.

Mrs. Quilp only lives three or four more years, and you'll be just the proper age for me. So be a good girl, Nell, and see if one of these days, you don't become Mrs. Daniel Quilp number two, of Tower Hill.²⁶

Cleverly, Quilp's later exclamations sound typical of adoration for children, "What a pretty little Nell!"²⁷ Yet the sexual suggestion remains clear to modern readers, if not to other characters.

QUILP: Has [Nell] come to sit upon Quilp's knee, or is she going to bed in her own little room inside here? Which is poor Nelly going to do?

BRASS: What a remarkably pleasant way he has with children, upon my word it's quite a treat to hear him.²⁸

Landers accurately detects that this perverse little man's

sinister dominance over Nell has a strong sexual

undercurrent, an aspect of the nightmare of childhood as

Dickens suggests.²⁹

²⁶Ibid., 4.

²⁷Ibid., 7.

²⁸Ibid., 7.

²⁹See John Carey, The Violent Effigy: A Study of Dickens' Imagination (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 26. Carey offers an astute commentary on Quilp and his relation to Little Nell:

Quilp is Dickens' way of avenging himself upon the sentimental set-up of The Old Curiosity Shop, upon all that part of his nature that revelled in angelic, plaster heroines, the deaths of little children, and touching animals. To aid her in her assault on the readers' hearts, for example, Nell has a little bird in a cage. Quilp

The exploitation of children assumes another sinister dimension in Uncle Tom's Cabin, which does not utilize the conflict of a single brute villain against the slaves but is larger in scope, examining the systemic evil of slavery. Here even compassionate slaveowners are indicted for their exploitation of the powerless slaves of which children are the most defenseless, particularly in the effects of slavery on the young victim Topsy. Topsy is less victimized because of her owner's abuse than the unnatural circumstances surrounding her birth. For Stowe, the extreme vice of slavery was more than the oppression of an individual; the brutality lay in its utter disregard and thoughtless destruction of the family, a consequence suffered by Tom and Chloe, and George, Eliza, and their son. As Eva tells her father, "These poor creatures love their children as much as you do me."³⁰

Topsy suffers the most extreme version of this abuse of familial bonds, for she was a victim in

threatens to wring its neck. He is salaciously inclined towards Little Nell herself, gloats over her blue veins and transparent skin, and invites her to become the second Mrs. Quilp. Nell trembles violently, much to Quilp's amusement. When he takes over Nell's grandfather's house, he chooses her own little bed to sleep in. Dickens offers violence to his own sexless heroine in these passages, and with aggressive enjoyment.

³⁰Aiken, 106.

conception, produced in a quasi-breeding factory.

She tells Ophelia:

Never was born, tell you; never had no father,
nor mother, nor nothin. I war raised by a
speculator, with lots of others, Old Aunt Sue
used to take care on us.³¹

St. Clare verifies her story, "She speaks the truth,
cousin. Speculators buy them up cheap, when they
are little, and get them raised for the market."³²

The result of this little girl's victimization is to
have become uncontrollable, angering everyone
through her impish behavior. Her stealing, lying,
and pranks contrast with the angelic Eva. However,
Topsy does not remain mischievous, for the young
girl is redeemed when she finds a mother substitute
in Ophelia, and to a certain extent in Eva. The
maternal bond transforms Topsy who is ultimately
shown leading the idealized life of a middle-class
New Englander.

These abandoned children are forced to survive
on their own, tormented and exploited by individuals
and social institutions that disregard their
sensitive natures. The physical abuse they suffer
is insignificant when compared to the psychological
suffering they must endure. But Topsy, Oliver, and

³¹Ibid., 91.

³²Ibid., 91.

Little Nell are instinctively good and their solitary entry into and passage through the adult world is a violent assault which demands parental protection or death to preserve their innocent spirits. Adult society is a malicious villain and life for these solitary victims, until their escape, an unending nightmare.

The Lost Child

In an age of melodrama, the separation of parent and child offered writers its greatest source of pathos, tapping the personal fear of loss by capitalizing on parental anxieties. The reality of child-theft was a genuine fear. According to a member of the House of Commons in 1814, "there were at this time three principal reasons why children were in fact stolen: for the value of their clothes; so that they could be brought up as the children of another; to be sold, some to beggars to excite charity in the observer, and some to unscrupulous employers in the less attractive trades in which children were employed--such as chimney-sweeping and prostitution. Under the existing law, only those against whom it could be proved that they had stolen a child for its clothes could be

punished."³³ Contemporary works, consequently, often depict the villain destroying or attempting to destroy the family's bond. The child in these works plays a pivotal role in establishing dramatic tension and heightening melodramatic pathos.

An example of a violent separation of parent and child is found in J. B. Buckstone's Luke the Labourer (1826), an example of an early native English melodrama which uses emotion rather than spectacle to achieve its effect as the child is stolen from a loving family. Here the deranged, dissolute Luke of the title flagrantly disregards his responsibilities as a husband and employee, spending his time gambling, drinking, and wrestling. His unstable emotional condition seems to have been prompted by the death of his own child which he describes: "The roof of the house were beaten in by the storm, and our child that lay sucking at its mother's breast in peace, was killed by the rafter that fell upon its head. Methinks I see it now.

³³Rosamond Bayne-Powell, 360. See also James H. Forse, "Extortion in the Name of Art in Elizabethan England: The Impressment of Thomas Clifton for the Queen's Chapel Boys," Theatre Survey 31 (November 1990): 165-176. Forse's article describes child theft and the resulting extortion as practiced in Elizabethan theatre.

Oh, the sight on't drive me to madness!"³⁴ He blames his employer Farmer Wakefield for the disrepair of his home and consequently his son's accidental death as well as a host of other ills.

His anger has led him to plot against Wakefield. Luke has enlisted the help of Mike the gypsy: "we'll ha' the boy, and though we get well drenched, the thought of what we make his father suffer will gladden our hearts and make 'em beat with joy."³⁵ Act 2, scene 1, begins ominously, as a thunderstorm illuminates the two kidnappers outside the Wakefield's home where they plan to sneak inside and steal the child away. In scene 2 Luke discovers the sleeping boy who reminds him of his own lost son, prompting near murderous violence:

That face of innocence! Such had been my child, had it not been for that tremendous night. Ah, and shall my enemy possess his, and I alone be childless? Noa! This night's storm reminds. My poor child's fate rushes on my mind, and plunges me in grief I cannot conquer. 'Twas Farmer's fault, had he ha' kept the cot in repair, the roof had not fell, and I had still been a father. He's a parent. The child's at my mercy. Yes, I'll do't.³⁶

³⁴J. B. Buckstone, Luke the Labourer, collected in The Golden Age of Melodrama: Twelve Nineteenth Century Melodramas, ed. and with an Introduction by Michael Kilgarriff (London: Wolf Publishing, 1974), 98.

³⁵Ibid., 102.

³⁶Ibid., 102.

The music underscores and heightens his violent fury and horror as Luke takes out his knife and approaches the bed in a threatening manner. Fortunately, the boy's mother enters to wish her son a peaceful slumber, interrupting Luke. Calmed somewhat by the interruption, he returns to his original plan and steals the child. The scene ends as Luke carries the sleeping child out the window accompanied by appropriately nerve-wrenching music.³⁷

Twenty years elapse before the ensuing acts when a grown Phillip returns as a sailor to his home and aids in the unmasking of the villains and the rescue of his sister, the heroine. Ultimately, the play is resolved when the family is reunited, but before this joyous reunion the family undergoes a horrifying separation. This cruel act plays on a parent's fear of the unknown and their desire to protect their children. While the writer appeals to the audience's sense of pity for the child and parents, the predominant emotion remains the fear of such a dangerous, cruel act. With twenty years separating acts 2 and 3, the plays avoids portraying the agony of separation rather; the focus is the act

³⁷Ibid., 103.

of stealing the child and plays upon the fear of such an act.

The classic use of the separation and reunion of parent and child is found in the dramatization Monte Cristo (1883), a vehicle adapted by the international star Charles Fechter and based on the Dumas novel The Count of Monte Cristo (1844).³⁸ In this case it is the parent, not the child, who is captive. Indeed Fechter's major alteration of his source is his focus on this standard melodramatic formula. The play begins as Edmund Dantes and the young Mercedes are about to be married. But moments before the ceremony begins, the villain Danglars has Dantes arrested and taken to the Chateau d'If. Act 2 is set eighteen years later with Mercedes confessing that their marriage was "not the union of two loving souls alone, it was the reparation of a fault. A son was born to me."³⁹

By sending her son to military school, Mercedes was able to spend the years desperately searching for Dantes. In order to confer on her son the title

³⁸Alexandre Dumas, The Count of Monte-Cristo, trans. Lowell Bair (New York: Bantam Books, 1981).

³⁹Charles Fechter, The Count of Monte Cristo, collected in America's Lost Plays: Four Plays and "Monte Cristo" and Other Plays, ed. Barret Clark (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1965), 28.

Viscount de Morcerf, she finally decides to marry the villain Fernand. Mercedes' confidant advises:

Your son's future claims your care. He has been brought up under the name of Mondego which is Fernand's name as well as yours. He will remain ever ignorant of his birth--none will suspect it--every career is open to him, and if I may judge by the noble conduct Fernand has displayed, the Count de Morcerf will prove a father to your boy.⁴⁰

But to give her son this future, she will destroy any hope of marrying her one true love.

After Dantes escapes from prison, he returns to seek his revenge. Disguised as an abbe, he meets his son who ironically greets him as "father." Neither knows their true relationship but as they talk the son senses a mysterious bond between them:

Although my reason clearly tells me that we have met to-day for the first time, it seems to me as though we were acquainted before--before united where I know not. . . . from the moment I met you on the way, I felt the necessity of hastening to your aid, of being some service to you. When as you rode behind, your arms entwined me, a strange emotion filled my heart, a tear of delight sprang to my eye. . . . I love you more than I love my father, almost as I love my mother.⁴¹

Later Dantes' true identity is utilized ironically when, under the guise of the Count of Monte Cristo, he works out his revenge: the murder of Fernand's son--in reality his own son. Happily, after a flashy duel scene, the truth is revealed and the

⁴⁰Ibid., 29.

⁴¹Ibid., 40.

family is reunited. Albert's instinctual attraction, a "call of the blood,"⁴² to his father plays a pivotal role in Fechter's adaptation, utilizing the hidden identity of father and son to heighten irony and excitement.

The return of a lost parent is the subject of Henry Arthur Jones's The Silver King (1882) where the father is separated from the family and mother and the children suffer for the father's crimes. Children serve alternately to increase each parent's misery. The play begins with Denver drinking and gambling away his fortune, leaving his wife and children penniless. As always, a life of vice has led to dreadful consequences and Denver suffers appropriately, implicated in a murder he did not commit. Too late he realizes:

Ah, my wife, how thoughtful she was! Shall I ever see her again--and my children--Ah, Heaven, work out some way of escape for me--not for my own sake, not to shield me from the just consequences

⁴²Originally, Voltaire made the conceit popular in his dramatic works. Zaire (1732), one of Voltaire's best plays, includes the use of this instinctive attraction of blood relatives, known as a "voix du sang." The sentimental nature of the device was readily adopted in nineteenth century melodrama.

G. B. Shaw ridicules this conceit in You Never Can Tell (1897), by removing the sentimentality from this instinctual attraction. The rational, high-spirited, teen-age twins tease and taunt their long lost father for their amusement. Three Plays for Puritans: The Devil's Disciple, Caesar and Cleopatra, Captain Brassbound's Conversion, v.9 (London: Constable and Co., 1930).

of my crime but for the sake of my dear wife and innocent children who have never done any wrong. Spare me till I have made atonement for the evil I have done.⁴³

He must leave to redeem himself.

Jones next shifts the focus to Denver's wife Nelly and their children. Again the heroine-mother is at her lowest point, having been thrown out of her home. She now lives in a shack which she rents from Skinner, the true murderer. Penniless, she and the children are starving, the youngest near death. Denver returns after three and a half years, presumed to have died in a train accident. In actuality, he has been in the United States where he made a fortune in the silver mines. But because he was accused of murder, he continues to hide his identity. Disguised, Denver walks through his old town and sees a little girl, Cissy, being teased and rejected by the other children because her father was a criminal. Denver comforts her, ultimately discovering that she is his daughter.

My own child. The sins of the father are visited upon the children. Oh, Heaven, is it just? What has this innocent lamb done that she should be hounded for my crime!

Jones milks the irony and pathos of the situation as Cissy tells him, "I know I should have been very

⁴³Henry Arthur Jones, The Silver King, collected in Representative Plays, vol. 1, ed. Clayton Hamilton (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1925), 41.

fond of you if you had been my father."⁴⁴

Denver returns with the child to their home and discovers their impoverished circumstances. This play traces the stages of the family's destruction and final reunion. Ultimately, having the means to rescue his family, the "Silver King" proudly calls them around him:

Come, let us kneel and give thanks on our own
hearth in the dear old home where I wooed you and
won you in the happy, happy days of long ago.
Come, Jaikes--Cissy, Ned, Nell--come in--Home at
last!⁴⁵

This final tableau reinforces the family's triumph.

One of the most emotionally and moralistically charged novels of popular literature, Mrs. Henry Wood's East Lynne (1861), which had numerous stage adaptations, pedantically exploits not only the obvious emotionality of separated parent and child, but utilizes separation and ultimately death to serve as both retribution and redemption for the morally tainted heroine. While there were many stage versions of Mrs. Henry Wood's tremendously popular book, two will be referred to here, John Oxenford's (1864) and an anonymous version (1862). Both capitalize on their source's melodramatic qualities, following the twists and turns of

⁴⁴Ibid., 61.

⁴⁵Ibid., 109.

coincidence. The tainted heroine Lady Isabell is duped into running away with the villain Levinsohn, then, having been mistakenly reported killed in a train accident, returns home disguised as a nursemaid for her dying son. Mrs. Henry Wood manipulates a child's death for emotional impact on her characters and audience but also employs the dying boy as a tool of moral flagellation. The novel is fraught with melodramatic potentials, providing dramatic adapters tremendous opportunities for unrestrained emotional sensation.

The novel and stage versions are so identifiably interrelated, it is interesting to turn to passages from the novel to enhance an analysis of the play. It is particularly Mrs. Wood's moral prescriptions that dramatic adapters overrun. What the novel lingers on for moral purposes is compressed through emblematic characters and action on stage. However, her moralizations expand an understanding of the function of the dying child in the work--for it is more complex than is immediately perceptible from the stage adaptation.

The negation of life and living becomes Mrs. Henry Wood's anthem as she upholds the next world as better than this one. The English author would direct all to the grave (preferably as early as

possible). The narrator elaborates: "There will be a blessed rest for the weary, when this toilsome life is ended."⁴⁶ Children, particularly, should be in a "fairer world than this."⁴⁷ Mrs. Henry Wood's message is more unyielding than Oxenford's adaptation where the locus of emotional tension clearly remains with the suffering repentant mother. With Oxenford the message is more uncomplicated: the wayward woman who abandons her god-given duties as mother and wife is agonizingly punished when she is forced to witness her son's death.

In Mrs. Henry Wood's universe the afterlife is primary. Death, if difficult (and for children it is typically not terribly difficult), is a positive transition. While wringing maximum pathos from the scene, the author gleefully elaborates her puritanical message:

"It's nothing to die when God loves us," the child declares.

"But whether we live or die, we are in the hands of God: you know that William, and whatever God wills is always for the best," his father replies. By the side of William Carlyle's dying bed knelt the Lady Isabel. The time was at hand, and the boy was quite reconciled to his fate. Merciful indeed is God to dying children! It is astonishing how very readily, where the right means are taken, they may be brought to look with pleasure, rather than fear upon their unknown

⁴⁶Mrs. Henry Wood, East Lynne (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, reprint from 1861), 484.

⁴⁷Ibid., 484.

journey.⁴⁸

In Guardians and Angels David Grylls identifies the romantic and the puritanical as the two extremes of the child-image and examines their intersection in child-death. The romantic desire to avoid external corruption destructive to the innately pure spirit of the child and the puritanical desire to propagandize heaven over earth, especially for children, rush children to an early grave so that they may be saved from corruption in this world.⁴⁹ In Mrs. Henry Wood's puritanical view, as represented in fiction and theatre, the child exhibits a preference for the next world. Little William proclaims, in an anonymous dramatic adaptation, "It is nothing to die when our Saviour loves us."⁵⁰ His death is thus an act of faith and substantiates thematically and imagistically the primacy of heaven.

Second, the child's death heightens the retribution against the mother for her sin. Pure pathos is elicited as the mother suffers agonies

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Grylls, 24.

⁵⁰Anonymous, East Lynne, an adaptation of Mrs. Henry Wood's novel, collected in British Plays of the Nineteenth Century: An Anthology to Illustrate the Evolution of the Drama, ed. J. O. Bailey (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1966), 322.

watching her son's death. In Oxenford's stage version, Isabell still disguised as his nurse-maid, reveals her true identity when Little William cries for his mother. Isabell exclaims, "Look at me; do you know me?" William sighs, "Mamma! Mamma! My own Mamma!"⁵¹ and dies. The child's death also paves the way for his mother's redemption when she dies in the following scene. Wood's original Little William asks his nurse-maid-cum-mother whether he will see his natural mother in heaven and she assures him:

Oh, William, her whole life after she left you was one long scene of repentance--of seeking forgiveness; but her sorrow was greater than she could bear, and her heart broke in its yearning for you.

.
 . . . [She said] that she parted from her children here, but that she should meet them again in heaven, and be with them forever: there, where all the awful pain and sadness, all the guilt of this world will be washed out and He will wipe our tears.⁵²

And as she dies she tells her husband, "I am going to William. . . ."⁵³ Her son's death has purified her and prepared her for death and entry into heaven. In the theatre, after Isabell has endured the requisite suffering for atonement, the stage

⁵¹John Oxenford, East Lynne, collected in The Golden Age of Melodrama: Twelve Nineteenth-Century Melodrama, ed. Michael Kilgarriff (London: Wolfe Publishing Limited, 1974), 302.

⁵²Anon., East Lynne, 324.

⁵³Ibid., 326.

version incorporates a final tableau which, much like Uncle Tom's Cabin, displays William and Lady Isabell sitting on a heavenly cloud,⁵⁴ visually establishing the child's death as redemption for the mother.

Eros and Thanatos intermingle in this simplistic morality-melodrama. The dying boy has an erotic attraction, as will be shown later in my discussion of The Death of Tintagiles and The Turn of the Screw. The book and stage adaptations of East Lynne both reflect the passionate arousal of the mother-figure attempting to prolong life or, possibly, seduce death. The stage version suggests a mixture of mourning and eroticism as she leans over his bed, breathing heavily. But the book provokes an even more sensual image: "She glided down upon her knees and let her face rest on the bolster beside him, her breath in contact with his . . . ! She leaned over him, her breath mingling with his, she took his little hand in hers."⁵⁵

The erotic feeling of this brief narrative is revealing in a work so preoccupied with sin that it prefers dead children to living ones. Sexuality, the true villain of the work, rises here although

⁵⁴Auerbach, Private Theatricals, 23.

⁵⁵Wood, 409.

Mrs. Henry Woods and her audience, possibly titillated by the eroticism, did not recognize it, for it involved a mother and child. Sexuality clothes itself in different guises while seemingly denied on so many levels; the passage continues: "Lady Isabel gazed down at William; as if she would have devoured him, a yearning, famished sort of expression upon her features."⁵⁶ Woods and the theatre she inspired had multiple uses for the child from sublimated erotic imagery to redemptive symbolism to blatant pathos, indicating the dynamism of the dying child even in the most conservative literature.

During the nineteenth century, melodramas of all sorts--Gothic, mystery, nautical--arose in response to certain emotional needs. With emotions and physical actions the primary forces driving the genre, melodrama exploited audience identification with the plight of the hero or heroine. In domestic melodrama fear and pity are evoked through threats to the family unit: parents are forced from their

⁵⁶Ibid. James incorporates erotic narrative in The Turn of the Screw such as the following, "At this, with a moan of joy, I enfolded, I drew him close; and while I held him to my breast, where I could feel in the sudden fever of his little body the tremendous pulse of his little heart, kept my eyes on the thing at the window." Henry James, The Turn of the Screw (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), 99.

children; children are stolen from their families; families are threatened with the loss of home or income. Although the emotional tone and events are clearly exaggerated, the issues are founded on genuine emotional states.

In domestic melodrama the parent-hero operates from pure motives, even if misguided choices may have precipitated ensuing troubles. Children in such threatening circumstances generate the melodramatic parent's actions as the adult attempts to keep the family together or to restore unity. But the child evokes not only the dramatic parents' concern, children are employed to touch the audience members' fears and sympathies as well.

THE TRANSCENDENT CHILD

The Child as Saint

During the industrial age, children were orphaned and abandoned in exceptionally large numbers. That literature should have grown concerned with their plight and reflected, or exploited, their misfortunes was, if new, not surprising. However, the child was not used solely to depict the pathos of the waif's abandonment or abuse. The most striking image to emerge from this new thematic material, unique and extreme, was that of the child-

saint. Prompted by the romantic reconceptualization of childhood, children became miniature divinities so pure that they were portrayed as able to provide spiritual salvation, not unlike the Christ child, to adults from whom they differed radically.

Little Eva, Stowe's creation in Uncle Tom's Cabin, epitomizes the phenomenon of the child-saint. Embodying absolute virtue, she is conceived as intimately connected with the spiritual world and able to understand the benign acts of heaven in a way incomprehensible to adults. Indeed Stowe called her fictional daughter "an impersonation in childish form of the love of Christ."⁵⁷ While Eva is the apex of these child-divinities, she has many intriguing relatives, revealing that her appearance was not unprecedented but part of a larger imaginative phenomenon.

In Songs of Innocence and Experience Blake includes "A Cradle Song," a simple invocation for children, calling forth

Sweet dreams form a shade
O'er my lovely infants head.
Sweet dreams of pleasant streams,
By happy silent moony beams

Sweet sleep with soft down

⁵⁷Stowe, cited by Daniel Gerould, "Uncle Tom's Cabin and Melodrama," collected in Jiji, 12.

Weave thy brows an infant crown.⁵⁸

The image of an "infant crown" conjures a holy image of a halo, a picture which is underscored by an accompanying engraving which shows the infant's pillow conspicuously arranged to form a halo around its head. Blake continues employing verbal images that evoke the infant's divine connection, referring to it as an "Angel mild" with a face described as a "Holy image I can trace." Finally Blake associates children with the Christ-child who

Smiles on thee on me on all,
Who became an infant small,
Infant smiles are his own smiles,
Heaven and earth to peace beguiles.⁵⁹

This warm lullaby evokes the blessed sacredness of the newborn.

Like Blake, Wordsworth links the infant with its spiritual source. In "Intimations on Immortality" he describes the moment of creation in holy terms and reverses Locke's position that ideas arise only from life experience. Wordsworth asserts that as the infant leaves its divine, pre-natal realm ". . . birth is but a sleep and a forgetting."⁶⁰ The poet

⁵⁸Blake, 16.

⁵⁹Ibid., 17.

⁶⁰William Wordsworth, "Intimations on Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," quoted by Jacomina Korteling, Mysticism in Blake and Wordsworth (New York: Haskell House, 1966), 132.

then claims that infants

. . . cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home.⁶¹

The divine image is completed, "Heaven lies about us
in our infancy!"⁶²

At the same time that Wordsworth was exalting these youthful angels in his poetry, the German Romantic painter Phillip Otto Runge was glorifying them. Runge's Luise Perthes (1805) depicts a pudgy, curly blonde four-year-old standing on a chair in order to look out a window. Runge takes the view into the child's world by evoking the girl's perspective, giving the audience a sense of her minute size in comparison with the chair and windowsill. Thus he conveys the child's view of adult surroundings and establishes a distinct visual perspective. More significant, however, is Runge's treatment of light. Rays of light encompass the blonde girl dressed in yellow, giving the sense that she, not the sunshine, emits a warm, luminous glow. Runge's painting, in which the child is endowed with a haloed radiance, is evocative of both the natural

⁶¹Ibid., 132.

⁶²Ibid., 132.

and supernatural realms.⁶³

Another nondramaturgical example which may help to enhance a perspective regarding these beatific children is found in George Eliot's Silas Marner.⁶⁴

In her novel the author adopts a golden equivalent to Luise, giving the babe, Eppie, the function of infant savior for the spiritually lost hero.

Marner, the weaver, betrayed by his best friend and fiancée and shunned by the community, isolates himself in a cottage outside Raveloe. His crushed spirit reduces

his life to the unquestioning activity of a spinning insect. He hated the thought of the past; there was nothing that called out his love and fellowship toward the strangers he had come amongst; and the future was all dark, for there was no Unseen Love that cared for him.⁶⁵

Alienated from human contact, he dedicates his life to accumulating gold.

Eliot makes the connection between the gold and the child quite literal. When his gold is stolen, Marner is driven into a frenzy of despair until, as

⁶³Phillip Otto Runge, Luise Perthes, oil on canvas, Kunsthalle, Hamburg, 1805. A reproduction of the portrait is found in Rosenblum, The Romantic Child, 27.

⁶⁴Stage and film versions of Silas Marner were late and do not seem to have been as popular as the original novel form.

⁶⁵George Eliot, Silas Marner (New York: Bantam Books, 1986), 14.

if by divine providence, it is replaced by another little golden bundle:

To his blurred vision, it seemed as if there were gold on the floor . . . [which] seemed to glow and get larger beneath his agitated gaze. He leaned forward at last, and stretched forth his hand; but instead of the hard coin with the familiar resisting outline, his fingers encountered soft warm curls.⁶⁶

Eppie is raised by Marner in a manner approximating Rousseau's prescriptions in Emile, given, as she is, little indoctrination into adult values and customs. The child mistakes his one attempt to punish her for a game which she is anxious to repeat. Unencumbered by parental discipline, her instinctual goodness guides her. Appearing similar to the gilded, haloed radiance which emanates from Runge's Luise, Eliot endows Eppie with an angelic essence that makes her a divine vessel for Marner's spiritual salvation.

Many nineteenth-century novels did have a powerful life on stage, among them Ten Nights in a Bar-room, The Old Curiosity Shop, Uncle Tom's Cabin. In some cases they proved even more popular in the theatre than on the page. Children thrived on the stage; Little Eva's role, for example, increased in prominence, as a critic explained:

Early in the performance George Harris was the hero and the heroine was his wife, Eliza. Presently, George and Eliza vanished from the

⁶⁶Ibid., 111-112.

stage. . . and Uncle Tom became the hero with Eva St. Clare pressing him hard for stellar honors until her untimely and pathetic death.⁶⁷

Eva's appeal was so strong that her role continued to grow as variant versions included two Evas and two Uncle Toms. Again, the stage adaptations reveal varying degrees of sophistication or reductive simplicity, but each searches for the simplest and most emotionally direct language and imagery when translated to the stage, typically avoiding the more complex spiritual and psychological dimensions of a work such as Eliot's.

William Pratt adapted T. S. Arthur's American temperance novel Ten Nights in a Bar-Room and What I Saw There (1858) for the stage. Pratt's adaptation (1858) provides a wonderful example, helpful for its simplicity and directness, of the young daughter who redeems her father. In this melodrama with a social conscience, Simon Slade, proprietor of the Sickle and Sheaf, and his young son Frank are, at first, happy and prosperous. Simon boasts that his young boy "has no taste for liquor, and might for months pour it out without a drop finding its way to his

⁶⁷Lynn Hill, "The Role of Heroes and Villains in Nineteenth-Century Melodrama" (Ph.D. diss., The City University of New York, 1982), 144.

lips."⁶⁸ But that is only one month after the bar has opened. Ten years later, the devil's elixir has destroyed the Slade family. Mrs. Slade, driven mad, ends in an asylum, and Simon is killed by his own son. The murder weapon is literally alcohol, for Frank hits his father over the head with a bottle. Thus, in the Slade's story, the temperance activist shows the family destroyed and the child corrupted by the world of the bar-room.

The Morgan story follows the opposite route. Joe Morgan, once a mill owner, begins the play as an impoverished drunk. He ashamedly confesses:

Every dime I get only makes me the more anxious to reach this house to obtain that which will keep me from thinking of my miserable home--my heartbroken wife and angel child.⁶⁹

His "angel child" Mary is first seen arriving at the bar to retrieve her father. Pratt suggests that the well-known temperance song "Father, dear Father, Come Home with Me Now" can be introduced with great effect.⁷⁰ The second time she arrives for him a fight breaks out inside. Slade throws a bottle at Joe but it sails past him, striking Mary on the

⁶⁸William Pratt, Ten Nights in a Bar-Room, collected in Hiss the Villain: Six English and American Melodramas, ed. Michael Booth (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1967), 152.

⁶⁹Ibid., 168.

⁷⁰Ibid., 159.

head. She runs on stage bleeding and crying,
 "Father! dear father! They have killed me!"⁷¹ The
 act curtain drops as Morgan pledges:

Villain; your career of landlord shall be short;
 for here I swear, by the side of my murdered
 child, you shall die the death of a dog!⁷²

Mary does not yet die, however, and Morgan is not
 yet ready to carry out his threats. He must first
 purify himself physically and spiritually.

The scene shifts to Morgan's home where Pratt
 shows a terrifying scene of Morgan suffering
 delirium tremens. While his wife cares for his
 physical pain, injecting him with morphine, it is
 his dying daughter to whom he turns for emotional
 and spiritual succor. His wife fades into the
 background as the relationship between father and
 daughter becomes the source of excitement and
 pathos. He begins to hallucinate, seeing snakes
 entwining his arms and becomes hysterical until he
 clings to Mary for protection.

MORGAN: Keep them off, I say! Keep them off!
 You won't let them hurt me, will you?
 There they are, creeping along the
 floor! Quick! jump out of bed, Mary!
 See, now--there--right over your head!

MARY: Nothing can hurt you here, dear father.

MORGAN: No, no; that's true. Pray for me, my

⁷¹Ibid., 170.

⁷²Ibid., 170.

child; they can't come in here, for this is your room. Yes, this is my Mary's room, and she is an angel. There--I knew you wouldn't dare to come in here. Keep off! keep off! Ha! ha! ha! ha!⁷³

Mary dies shortly afterward but not until she has saved her father physically, mentally, and spiritually.

The pre-adolescent girl through whom the patriarch finds salvation is also the focus of Lander's version of The Old Curiosity Shop (1841), with Little Nell assuming responsibility for her grandfather's salvation. The child's guardian grandfather, having compromised himself by gambling, loses their money and must ask Little Nell for her meager savings. When she refuses him, he tries to steal the sleeping girl's money from her tiny bank. A sleepwalking Nell returns to the room, wakes up, and catches him. Begging his granddaughter for forgiveness, he then finds the strength to break his addiction. And although their travails have only begun, he reaches a state of grace through the young girl.

The most spiritually enlightened child is Little Eva. Completely conscious of her divine connection, she tells Uncle Tom that spirits "come to me

⁷³Ibid., 176.

sometimes in my sleep--those spirits bright."⁷⁴ She is also able to foresee her own apotheosis, "I'm going there, to the spirits bright, Tom; I'm going before long" and explains to her father, "I want to go--I long to go!"⁷⁵ Eva's consummate spirituality and generosity contrast with her mother whose materialistic, racist values she cannot comprehend. Maria's selfishness estranges her from her husband and provides another impetus for the father-daughter bond.

The picture of a pre-pubescent girl purifying her father exceeds an important spiritual function assigned to all women in the nineteenth century--that of maintaining the sacredness of the home. This doctrine promoted and defended as sacred a woman's duty in the home. By remaining in the home women were to avoid contaminating contact with society's evils while the male of the household, whose responsibilities demanded daily encounters with social corruption, could then be purified on return to his domestic temple by his untainted spouse. This position, though repressive, is also an exalted one. However, the extreme purity attributed to Little Eva and her many idealized

⁷⁴Aiken, 105.

⁷⁵Ibid.

sisters outshone women because their innocence exceeds that of their adult counterpart, who was corrupted, if by nothing else, by her passage into womanhood. St. Clare rapturously declares to his daughter, "Oh, Evangeline! Rightly named; hath not heaven made thee an evangel to me?"⁷⁶

Pictorially, as evidenced in Aiken's stage directions, this special child is linked with nature.⁷⁷ Rousseau established the connection of children and nature, and artists, including Runge, followed, often depicting children amid flowers.⁷⁸ In Aiken's Uncle Tom's Cabin, Eva and Tom are revealed sitting in the garden grass as he sings hymns and interprets the Bible and she places a floral wreath around his neck. This pastoral setting underscores the religious aura, also an important theme for Stowe, and further contrasts with the stifling atmosphere of the house where Marie has cloistered herself as she suffers from an assortment of undefinable ailments.

Ultimately, it is Eva, not her mother, who dies.

⁷⁶Ibid., 90.

⁷⁷"The flat represents the lake. The rays of the setting sun tinge the waters with gold. A large tree. Beneath this a grassy band, on which Eva and Tom are seated side by side. Eva has a Bible open on her lap." Ibid., 104.

⁷⁸Rosenblum, 28-29.

Yet her spiritual power lingers, helping her father who has lost hope and faith necessary to conquer his spiritual ennui. After talking with Tom, St. Clare is overwhelmed by "a train of thoughts that almost bear me, on the strong tide of faith and feeling, to the gates of that heaven I so vividly conceive" and realizes that this brings him "nearer to Eva." Finding salvation in his pure child, he is able to join her in heaven, "At last! at last! Eva, I come!"⁷⁹

Eva's love is also able to redeem Topsy from her mischievousness. Questioned by Eva, Topsy confesses a litany of pranks--among them pouring dirty water on mulatto women--that she unleashes on all whom she deems hostile. Eva wonders about Topsy's family, but Topsy, who was produced on a quasi-breeding farm, denies any familial bond: "Never had nothing, nor nobody. I's brack--noone loves me."⁸⁰ But through her friend Eva and later her adoptive mother Ophelia, Topsy is provided with maternal love and becomes good. It is Eva who offers the first unconditional love to her:

Oh! Topsy, I love you! (Laying her hand on Topsy's shoulder.) I love you because you haven't had any father, or mother, or friends. I love

⁷⁹Ibid., 114.

⁸⁰Ibid., 97.

you, I want you to be good. I wish you would try to be good for my sake. (Topsy looks astonished for a moment, and then bursts into tears.) Only think of it, Topsy--you can be one of those spirits bright Uncle Tom sings about!⁸¹

The scene is strikingly like an evangelical sermon in which the minister lays hands on the sinner who is so moved he renounces his evil past. Eva's redemptive powers make her life and death a triumph. Finally, the iconography in the closing theatrical tableau makes Eva's divine connection literal when she ascends to heaven:

Gorgeous clouds, tinted with sunlight. Eva, robed in white, is discovered on the back of a milk-white dove, with expanded wings, as if just soaring upward. Her hands are extended in benediction over St. Clare and Uncle Tom, who are kneeling up to her. Impressive music.⁸²

The existence of the beatified child in the visual currency of the nineteenth century is evidenced again in a painting entitled The Child Enthroned (ca. 1894) by the artist Thomas Gotch. In his work a pre-adolescent girl is seated on a solid wooden chair that is hidden by her long, ornately flowered gown and robe. Her body disappears under the heavy material which blends into the carpeting and tapestry. The focus thus becomes the girl's contemplative face. Staring steadily

⁸¹Ibid., 97.

⁸²Ibid., 133.

straightforward, the girl seems rapt in meditation, considering matters far removed from the carefree daydreams of a young girl. To emphasize the spiritual dimension of her being, Gotch encircles her long blonde locks with a bright aureole, linking this child with the throngs of saints and Christian deities denoted by this crown-like emanation.⁸³ The last repository for the "enthronement" of humanity in this increasingly secular world was the child.

During a century in which traditional sacred iconography was becoming vulgarized, a need existed to establish a new visual and literary currency that could embody religious and ethical values. Thus children, especially little girls who represented the polar opposite of the patriarch, were enlisted to serve as uncontaminated mediums for spiritual salvation. They were endowed with healing powers, not because of gifts they possessed, but because of all they lacked: sexuality, knowledge of the world, independence. They became an embodiment of Christian ideals: "Lest ye become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

⁸³Thomas C. Gotch, The Child Enthroned, oil on canvas, Royal Academy Pictions, London, ca.1894. The above description is based on the discussion and reprint of the painting in Bram Dijkstra's Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siecle Culture (NY: Oxford University Press, 1986), 190.

By being united with his angelic daughter, a father could be purged and redeemed. In the final tableau of Uncle Tom's Cabin, St. Clare, despite his past, does enter heaven though no priest is there to provide extreme unction nor does he call on Jesus; it is Eva who delivers him. In nineteenth-century visual and literary terms, the young girl could be elevated to the level of the divine; a secular image replaced the function of Christ.

The Retributive Child

While writers typically found the young girl best suited for the role of transcendent child, boys do appear in the role, and, while they do embody innocence, they tend to operate on less explicitly Christian levels than their female counterparts. David Belasco in The Return of Peter Grimm uses Little William as a medium between the world of the living and the world of the dead. In the play Peter Grimm, a bachelor, has no children of his own but has semi-adopted a young woman, Catherine, who cares for him. Despite Catherine's affection for James, Grimm's secretary, he has promised her in marriage to his nephew, the villain, Frederick. Grimm also promises, "To see children in my house,--Katie's babies creeping on my floor; playing with my old

watchdog, Toby--I've promised myself a long line of rosy cheeked Grimms."⁸⁴ But he dies shortly after making his pledge.

Act 2 begins the day before the wedding. Frederick is rushing the marriage so that he can inherit his uncle's fortune and force Catherine to move with him to Europe. She is distraught, but complies for Grimm's sake. "Uncle Peter! Uncle Peter!" she cries, "Why did you do it? Why did you ask it? Oh dear! Oh, dear! If you could see me now."⁸⁵ In order to rescue her, Peter returns from the dead. The difficulty is that the adults cannot see or talk to him. Only the young boy can communicate with the supernatural realm, William explains, "I feel something, yes, sir. But where's your hand? There's nothing there. . . . I can't really hear you. . . . It's a dream."⁸⁶

When the adults enter the room, none know Peter's spirit is present, but William deciphers Peter's message for them.

⁸⁴David Belasco, The Return of Peter Grimm, collected in America's Lost Plays v. 8, Barret H. Clark, ed. (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1921; reprint ed., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), 849.

⁸⁵Ibid., 893.

⁸⁶Ibid., 849

PETER: You must say that I am very unhappy.

WILLIAM: He says he is very unhappy.

DOCTOR: Why is he unhappy? . . . Ask him.

WILLIAM: Why are you unhappy, Mr. Grimm?

PETER: I am thinking of Catherine's
future. . . .

WILLIAM: Eh?

PETER: Tomorrow. . .

WILLIAM: Tomorrow. . .

PETER: Catherine's--

WILLIAM: Your--

.

PETER: Catherine--must--not--marry Grimm.

DOCTOR: Speak, William. Noone will hurt you.

.

WILLIAM: I'm afraid . . . I'm afraid . . . he
[Frederick] makes me cry. . .

.

PETER: William, make haste. . . . Frederick is
listening at the door.

WILLIAM: I won't say anymore. He's there
. . . at the door⁸⁷

Although he has difficulty expressing himself to the
adults, only the child is able to communicate with
the other world; the adults are too impure and
corrupt to enter the spiritual realm the way an

⁸⁷Ibid., 900-901.

innocent child is able.

Little William's purity not only permits him this supernatural communication, his innocence also proves a source of torment for the villain, Frederick, who finds the gentle boy a menacing presence. Ultimately, this innocence exposes and destroys the man who complains:

William is an uncomfortable child to have in the house. He has a way of staring at people as though he had a perpetual question on his lips. It's most annoying.⁸⁸

Eventually, William's tormentor is revealed to be his illegitimate son, and his stern treatment of the child is caused by his disgust at their relationship. Belasco works an interesting variation on the disguised-parent motif in that Frederick tries to deny his familial bond. This transcendent child differs not only because he is male; his spiritual connection is not, like Eva's, specifically Christian; instead William serves as a medium between the dead and the living. Furthermore, his purity and innocence are not used as a means of salvation, but as a means of destruction, ruining his evil father.

The romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley was certainly not a melodramatist on the order of

⁸⁸Ibid., 867.

Pixérécourt or Boucicault; his dramatic work Cenci (1819) is appropriately linked with Cain as a Romantic verse drama. However, Shelly's work, like Byron's, exhibits many melodramatic characteristics despite its poetic dialogue and philosophic complexities. Cenci, an embodiment of despotic evil, cruelly dominates and psychologically tortures his wife and children. The Count's villainy and his family's helplessness are polarized in a melodramatic duality that places the sophisticated poetic dimensions of this work within a melodramatic framework.

Shelley includes Cenci's young son Bernardo who is similar to Little William in Peter Grimm. An analysis of Cenci helps to explain the function of the young boy who stands in stark contrast to the consummate evil of his father, the Count Cenci. Like Little William, Bernardo's presence is enough to provoke his father's wrath,

Thou . . . loathed image of thy cursed mother,
Thy milky, meek face makes me sick with hate!⁸⁹

Although his role is comparatively small, it is not insignificant for he is set in contrast with his

⁸⁹Percy Bysshe Shelley, The Cenci, collected in Nineteenth-Century Verse Drama, ed. and with an Introduction by Gerald B. Dauver and Gerald C. Sorensen (Rutherford, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1973), 142.

older sister Beatrice. The horrors to which Beatrice has been subjected have enabled her to be a strong-willed adversary; Bernardo, however, is bewildered, unable to comprehend or oppose his father's cruelty and, consequently, he accepts it.

An emanation of pure evil, Cenci's greatest desire is to leave his children a legacy of corruption and hate. His goal, far more extreme than Fagin's, is to morally destroy the innocent nature of his offspring. Cenci bitterly rages:

to Bernardo,
He is so innocent, I will bequeath
The memory of these deeds, and make his youth
The sepulchre of hope where evil thoughts
Shall grow like weeds on a neglected tomb.⁹⁰

In the nineteenth century, a child's innocence is threatening to adults. The perceived threat of the child's innocence and uncorrupted state implies a recognition of and self-disgust with their own corruption. The purity of the child can either punish adult corruption or redeem it.

As a cultural code, childhood assumed dimensions and meanings that were vital to the nineteenth century consciousness. During an age characterized by scientific revolutions and political turmoil both of which "dethroned" humanity from its unquestioned divinity, childhood became the final locus for

⁹⁰Ibid., 153.

embodying holiness. In a world increasingly viewed as corrupt, the child as a vessel of purity is in part reassuring and in part a relief from guilt. These youthful embodiments of innocence offered writers not only a means to evoke pathos or display social corruption, they provided a visual manifestation of attributes no longer attached to adults. If adults were corrupt, at least the child, the bud, the source could be seen as a divine emanation.

CHAPTER 4

IBSEN'S CHILD: THE SUBVERSION OF CONVENTION

Henrik Ibsen, perhaps the most influential playwright of the century, found children a significant dramaturgic device and finds a place for them in most of his dramatic works.¹ A poet, Ibsen uses imagery and other poetic devices in his plays; even in his realistic plays, Ibsen evokes mythic and poetic qualities that create ambiguous distinctions between realistic and poetic dramatic conventions. Children operate in Ibsen's work on all dramatic levels as symbolic evocations and as important characters. From the little children scampering around Nora's feet to the child-symbol in The Master

¹Children's rights were a major issue for another of the century's most important playwrights Bernard Shaw, see "Misalliance with a Treatise on Parents and Children," collected in The Works of Bernard Shaw v. 13 (London: Constable and Co., 1930). Unlike Ibsen's plays, children never appear as characters in Shaw's works. The unsentimental treatment of the sharp-tongued adolescent twins in You Never Can Tell (1897) and the comically abused orphan Effie in The Devil's Disciple (1897) are the characters closest to children. Both give a sense of his rejection of melodramatic stereotypes by avoiding pathos and playfully mocking devices such as the reunion of parent and child and the suffering orphan. However, none of the characters qualifies as a child; and it is significant that Shaw, ever avoiding extreme sentiment, never dramatizes children.

Builder (1892) or in his most fully realized child character Hedwig, Ibsen found profound power thematically, symbolically, and emotionally in the child.

When depicting children, Ibsen takes what, through the extremes and overuse of melodrama, had become conventionalized in the nineteenth-century conception of the child--the victimized child, the transcendent child, and the pathetic qualities of the child--and subverts these traditional codes. Ibsen accepts the image of the spiritually sensitive child but calls into question the ability of adults to be redeemed. Ibsen is not only one of the central figures in nineteenth-century drama but a writer to whom the child-image provided continual inspiration. The many multi-faceted children in his plays deserve special and extensive critical discussion. His work, of course, deserves consideration on its own artistic merits but also as a departure from previous conventions and as it paved the way for literary experiments at the turn of the century.

The Victimized Child

In Ibsen's plays adults are guilty of less explicit forms of brutality than those of

melodramatic villains like Luke the Laborer or Count Cenci; yet something as innocuous as self-involvement proves equally malignant in Ibsen's work and brings about equally destructive results. The most complex child in Ibsen's opus is undoubtedly Hedwig in The Wild Duck (1884) who, like many fictional children, is endowed with an otherworldliness; she is a being distinct and unknowable. As becomes clear as The Wild Duck progresses, her parentage is uncertain.² When Hjalmer asks "does Hedwig belong to me--or? Well?" even her mother Gina must admit "I don't know."³ But Hedwig is also an uncommon creature whose emotions and thoughts are impenetrable to the adults. For her part, Hedwig is bewildered by the adult world, feeling the closest affinity to her senile grandfather who, like her, can believe in the imaginary world of the attic. She is baffled by adult values and attitudes⁴; indeed Act II ends with her words, "This is all so strange to me."⁵

²Errol Durbach, Ibsen the Romantic: Analogues of Paradise in the Later Plays (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1982), 74.

³Henrik Ibsen, The Wild Duck, collected in Ibsen: Four Major Plays, ed. and trans. Rolf Fjelde, (New York: New American Library, 1965), 195.

⁴Ibid., 78.

⁵Ibsen, The Wild Duck, 178.

In certain ways Hedwig is both a child and an adult; an early adolescent, she has the creative, energetic mind of a child but assumes the emotional deportment of an adult as well as the responsibilities of one. Her father, by contrast, is a whining immature parent who turns to his daughter for emotional and personal support while selfishly withholding the same from her.

HEDWIG (going to him): Let me bring you your flute, Daddy.

HJALMAR: No, no flute. I want no pleasures in this world. (Pacing about.) Ah, yes, work--I'll be deep in work tomorrow; there'll be no lack of that. I'll sweat and slave as long as my strength holds out--

GINA: But Hjalmar, dear, I didn't mean it that way.

HEDWIG: Can't I get you a bottle of beer, then?

HJALMAR: Absolutely not. There's nothing I need. (Stopping.) Beer? Did you say beer?

HEDWIG (vivaciously): Yes, Daddy, lovely cool beer.

HJALMER: Well--if you really insist, I suppose you could bring in a bottle.⁶

Hjalmar's striking self-indulgence is vividly and humorously rendered in Act 2 scene 1 as Hedwig offers to help her father in his work retouching photographs. The contrast between the adult-child Hjalmar and the child-adult Hedwig is heightened

⁶Ibid., 145.

because Hedwig's health is poor--she is losing her eyesight--while it is her healthy father who complains bitterly about work destroying his health, "It's better just to leave me alone with all this--so long as my strength holds out. Nothing to worry about, Hedvig--if only your father can keep his health--."7 His subtle manipulations lead the child to continue pampering her father.

HEDWIG: (going to him) Let me take the brush, Daddy. I know I can.

HJALMAR: Oh, nonsense, you'll only ruin your eyes.

HEDVIG: No such thing. Give me the brush.

HJALMAR: (getting up): Well, it'll only be for a minute or two.

HEDVIG: Pooh! How could that hurt me? (Takes the brush.) There now. (Sitting.) And here's one to go by.

HJALMAR: But don't ruin your eyes! Hear me? I won't take the blame; you can take the blame yourself--you hear me?

HEDWIG: (at work retouching): Yes, yes, sure I will.⁸

Hjalmar's grand posturing and tragic rhetoric contrast with his behavior, making him, at such moments, a comic figure. However, Hedwig's presence is a reminder of the serious consequences of her

⁷Ibid., 160.

⁸Ibid., 160-161.

father's selfish motivations. Thus the comic and tragic currents that co-exist in The Wild Duck intersect in Hedwig and prove an explosive combination. The culmination of these two intersecting currents arises when Hjalmar deduces (accurately or not, it is never made clear) that Hedwig is not his daughter but Old Werle's. Again Hjalmar's passionate denunciation of the corruption in his home makes him appear infantile and comic. But the moment he directs his embittered denunciations toward Hedwig: "Don't come near me, Hedwig! Keep away. I can't bear seeing you,"⁹ his self-aggrandizing becomes malicious, changing the tone of the play and heightening the tragic element.

His moralistic exhibitionism affects Hedwig to the extent that the child who has lived to please her father is prompted, through the bewildering advice of Gregers, to perform the ultimate act of self-sacrifice for her father's love. Gregers suggests a rather complicated means to appease her father by sacrificing that which she loves most--the wild duck. She, on the other hand, makes the ultimate sacrifice--herself; the frightened girl is attempting to purge the alleged evil--her presence--from her father's home. Ibsen heightens

⁹Ibid., 195.

the painful irony of Hedwig's suicide, for, as Relling makes clear, her suicide will shortly be turned by her father into a sentimentally self-serving gesture¹⁰, devaluing her sacrifice and her life.

In Little Eyolf (1894) Ibsen again explores the destructiveness of self-involved parents who, despite their stated intentions, maim and then destroy their offspring. Like Hedwig, Eyolf is endowed with an alien quality. Eyolf is described by Ibsen as "frail but [with] fine, wise eyes,"¹¹ making his thoughts and feelings impenetrable to adults. Yet what is especially troublesome for the parents is their young son's crippled leg, a painful reminder to them of their negligence and aversion to their child. The child thus becomes like a wound or a sore to his parents who avoid him as much as possible.

Significantly, the title character appears only early in Little Eyolf and dies soon after his appearance, but his fate is central to the work as a

¹⁰Ibid., 216. RELING: "In less than a year little Hedwig will be nothing more to him than a pretty theme for recitations."

¹¹Henrik Ibsen, Little Eyolf, collected in The Plays of Henrik Ibsen, ed. and trans. Michael Meyer (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1961), 230.

whole and to the fate of the other characters. The play operates, particularly when the narrative is viewed through Eyolf's development, as a classical tragedy with Eyolf suffering a series of downward reversals. However, Eyolf's fate is not controlled by the gods or the fates but rather by his parents--his life is shown as completely out of his control and subject to the whims and moods of his two personal deities who harm him not out of maliciousness but rather careless disregard.

An event in the past has shaped little Eyolf's destiny. As an infant, he was left by his parents on a table while they made love. During their absence the child fell and his leg was permanently paralyzed. The play begins nine years later as Allmers, after a retreat in the mountains, returns and announces his decision to renounce writing and dedicate his life to Eyolf:

I want to help him to shape his ambitions towards goals that lie within his reach. As he is now, he longs only for the things he can never attain. I want to put happiness within his grasp.¹²

Allmers's goals are too obtuse, however, "Eyolf shall be the one of our family to fulfill himself. And it shall be my task to bring him to self-

¹²Ibid., 240.

fulfillment."¹³ By contrast, the practical Borghejm, a friend of the family's and a road builder, encourages the boy in reasonable activities like archery.

But his father is not the only destructive force which is inflicted upon Eyolf. Ibsen uncovers an interesting undercurrent of the bourgeois family: the mother's envy of the child. Rita, his mother, jealously resents her son for diverting Allmers' attention away from her, confessing

(shaking with emotion) I gave birth to him in unspeakable pain. But I endured it gladly and joyfully for your sake.

.
 . . . But that's past and done with. I want to live. Together with you. Wholly with you. I can't go on just being Eyolf's mother. And only that. Nothing else. I won't, I tell you! I can't!¹⁴

Her tone, though repressed, echoes Medea's passion. While the stakes are greater and the passion more exposed in Euripides' character, commonalities exist between the two women's experience. Medea also complains about the extreme pain of child-birth:

They say that we have a safe life at home, whereas men must go to war. Nonsense! I had rather fight three battles than bear one child.¹⁵

¹³Ibid., 241.

¹⁴Ibid., 244.

¹⁵Euripides, Medea, collected in Euripides: Ten Plays, ed. and trans. Moses Hadas and John McLean (New York: Bantam Books, 1960), 38.

The pain seems wasted when her husband Jason abandons her family. Medea's revenge for her husband's infidelities is the "murder [of] my children" as "it will hurt my husband most that way."¹⁶ Medea enunciates that which Rita tries to repress, "I do realize how terrible is the crime I am about, but passion overrules my resolutions, passion that causes most of the misery in the world."¹⁷ Rita, too, can be threateningly passionate. Allmers confesses, "Sometimes you almost frighten me, Rita," to which his wife responds, "I often frighten myself. For that reason you mustn't rouse the evil in me."¹⁸ Less expressly direct she too wishes "I had never borne him"¹⁹ and while not actively striking a knife in her boy her passive aggression manifests itself.

The Rat-Wife, a grotesque Pied-piper-type character, appears, asking for a little food and comfort in exchange for her services: she offers to rid the house of anything which "gnaws."²⁰ Though Allmers and Rita decline, denying they have any

¹⁶Ibid., 50.

¹⁷Ibid., 56.

¹⁸Ibsen, Little Eyolf, 244.

¹⁹Ibid., 246.

²⁰Ibid., 233.

"gnawing things" in their house, the Rat-Wife senses the presence of a creature that gnaws at their consciences.²¹ Eventually, the exterminator and her dog Mopsem and lure Little Eyolf "down into the deep."²²

Even after his death, Eyolf's presence continues to cast, "the evil eye of a child"²³ over his family the final two acts. Her son's death leads Rita to assert that she will now devote herself to the children of the town in order to placate "those staring eyes"²⁴ of her dead son. If her commitment is genuine, then Little Eyolf's death will have been redemptive. If, on the other hand, she is disingenuous, his death is meaningless.

The child victimized by family members differs significantly from melodramatic orphans like Oliver Twist and Topsy who are brutalized by social forces. In melodrama, parentless children passionately struggle to survive, exceeding in their will to live their parentally abused counterparts who eventually

²¹Richard Schechner, "The Unexpected Visitor in Ibsen's late Plays," collected in Ibsen: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Rolf Fjeld (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965), 161.

²²Ibid., 254.

²³Ibsen, Little Eyolf, 262.

²⁴Ibid., 285.

take their own lives. The parentless child, despite suffering repeatedly, clings to hope: a hope of finding a family, a hope to the relief of pain, a hope of spiritual salvation. Moreover, these orphans passively submit to their suffering, accustomed to it and accepting of it. Ibsen's parentally neglected children perceive themselves as responsible for family dissension and seek to restore harmony by removing the element of discord--themselves.

In the absolute religious and moralistic world of Mrs. Henry Wood, Little William's death could have a clear retributive and redemptive effect, but in Ibsen's world such sacrifices have no lasting effect for there is no redemptive phase in which such sacrifices are recognized. Here the child-savior myth is questioned; Eyolf and Hedwig are children who offer themselves as sacrifices in an attempt to right a world they feel responsible for disturbing but who operate in universes which do not reward such acts. Both Hedwig and Eyolf interpret and misinterpret signs from their parents that life was harmonious before their arrival and could be again if they were gone. They offer their lives as sacrifices--attempts to restore harmony--but their deaths ultimately evoke the inefficacy of their

acts, for the adults are too weak to be redeemed.

Ibsen upsets the accepted iconographic convention of the spiritually aligned child by subverting its value. As Ibsen constructs it, the child's sacrifice is not sanctified and the parents' acts and declarations are hollow. After Hedwig's suicide Hjalmar, in the posture of a tragic hero, declares, "(Clenching his fist and crying to heaven.) Oh, you up there--if you do exist. Why have you done this to me!"²⁵ Hjalmar's repeated bathos deflates the impact of the act, as the doctor reduces Hjalmar's agony to petty dimensions, stating, "The grief of death brings out greatness in almost everyone. But how long do you think this glory will last with him?"²⁶ Both Eyolf's and Hedwig's deaths may provide a greater degree of domestic harmony, but spiritually the child's death seems to have no profound impact. By sacrificing themselves, these children attempt to assert meaning and value in a world in which they perceive themselves as responsible for corrupting. The effect of their deaths, however, is insignificant because there is no fundamental assertion of a redemptive phase. The children only lose.

²⁵Ibid., 214.

²⁶Ibid., 215.

The Child's Death as Ethical and Spiritual
Imperative

Inspired in part by Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling (1843)²⁷, Ibsen taps the Biblical Isaac and Abraham myth in his dramatic poem Brand (1866) in order to explore aspects of faith.²⁸ Kierkegaard offers an inspiringly vivid account of acts of faith in Fear and Trembling which helps readers to understand Ibsen's psychologically complex work. Deploring religious sermons which take for granted Abraham's faith in God when he is commanded to sacrifice his son, Kierkegaard explores the level of faith Abraham must accept in order to follow through on his appointed task.²⁹ Kierkegaard avoids

²⁷Although Maurice Valency acknowledges that "It is not easy to decide to what extent Ibsen came under the influence of Soren Kierkegaard" and that Ibsen himself stated "'I have read very little of Soren Kierkegaard and understood even less,'" Valency concludes, as I have, "He evidently understood enough for his own purposes." Valency later comments, "It is astonishing how large a proportion of Ibsen's characters are conceived along Kierkegaardian lines; but it is equally surprising to see what Ibsen does with them." Maurice Valency, The Flower and the Castle (New York: MacMillan Press, 1963), 126-127.

²⁸See Durbach for an analysis of Brand, Kierkegaard, and the Kindermord, 81-85.

²⁹According to the Bible in Genesis Chapter 22, God tested Abraham saying, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." Abraham obediently took the boy and prepared an altar for the sacrifice, then "bound Isaac his son, and laid him on

retelling the narrative in order to focus on Abraham's inner turmoil while delineating the distinction between Abraham's act and those of a fanatic. Distinguishing Abraham's faith from blind faith and ignorance, Kierkegaard shows how Abraham considers and accepts the pain of the consequences, resigns himself to his loss, experiences a dizzying anxiety, and yet moves forward with this act of faith.

The ethical expression for what Abraham did is that he meant to murder Isaac; the religious expression is that he meant to sacrifice Isaac--but precisely in this contradiction is the anxiety that can make a person sleepless, and yet without this anxiety Abraham is not who he is. . . . In other words, if faith is taken away by becoming Nul and Nichts, all that remains is the brutal fact that Abraham meant to murder Isaac, which is easy enough for anyone to imitate if he does not have faith--that is, the faith that makes it difficult for him.³⁰

Employing the theme of child-sacrifice in this

the altar, upon the wood. Then Abraham put forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son." An angel interrupts Abraham and tells him, "Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." A second angel tells Abraham of the blessing he will receive because of his willingness to sacrifice his son. The Holy Bible, revised standard version (Cleveland: William Collins and World Publishing, Co., 1971), 17.

The act of child sacrifice captivated Kierkegaard's imagination and Fear and Trembling attempts to explain this complicated deed.

³⁰Soren Kierkegaard, Fear and Trembling/Repetition, ed. and trans. by Howard B. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 1983), 30.

early work, Ibsen likewise contrasts the nebulous distinction between an act of murder and an act of faith, exploring the ambiguities and complicated ethical distinctions of the Abraham myth. Brand, the local pastor, rejects the commonplace values of his community and demands an uncompromising acceptance of the ideal. His god, he explains is "like Hercules, / And not a grandpa-God, in life's decline."³¹ But Brand's demands are continually put in question, tried, and threatened. Challenges to his ethical positions come from various sources with the ultimate challenge a threat to his infant son. Earlier, however, Brand and the local community are told of a distraught father who kills his starving infant. The act, while unlawful, is motivated by love and compassion: the tormented father wants to end the child's suffering and may help his two other children by extending the family's limited resources to them. Brand, on hearing the act recounted, defines it as a "frightful deed" and a "mad, hellish crime."³²

Brand is later confronted with a similar choice, when the doctor tells him that, for the sake of

³¹Henrik Ibsen, Brand, trans. by G. M. Gathorne-Hardy (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1966), 47.

³²Ibid., 64.

their son's health, the family must move. Initially, Brand accepts his duty as a father and determines to leave, but immediately his decision is challenged by those who have heard him demand the ultimate sacrifice from others and now see him capitulating to human concerns.³³ He recognizes the challenge, "Each word I've preached among these frowning crags / Is striking back with tenfold echoes now."³⁴ He realizes his faith is being tested and challenged. Using Kierkegaard's language, Brand must accept the absurd as an affirmation of God and his potential. In this construct the poor man who murdered his child, while motivated by love and compassion, did not believe in God's ultimate power. Brand, by contrast, seeks to recognize God, renounce attachments, and repress compassion in order to allow God's will its place. "Jesus, Jesus, let me have Thy light," he cries.³⁵

Brand's action does not provoke sympathy nor understanding; it ends in Kierkegaardian paradox. Kierkegaard suggests: "The absolute duty can lead one to do what ethics [that which is inherent in the

³³Durbach, 81.

³⁴Kierkegaard, 110.

³⁵Ibid., 114.

operating laws of the universe ^{36]} would forbid. . ."³⁷ Brand becomes a "knight of faith,"³⁸ a individual who acts directly with God without the intervention of mediating forces such as the church, the state, or the ethical, superseding the realm of "the universal"³⁹ by directly encountering God.⁴⁰ Brand's sacrifice of his child remains inexplicable because it transcends the ethical. He enters a plane in which the ethical laws inherent in the universe are not operative--the realm of the paradoxical; he accepts the challenge of the absurd.⁴¹ Thus Brand is like Kierkegaard's Abraham. In sacrificing his son he must, like Abraham, "love Isaac with his whole soul. Since God claims Isaac, he must, if possible, love him even more, and only then can he sacrifice him, for it is

³⁶Ibid., 72.

³⁷Ibid., 74.

³⁸Ibid., 66.

³⁹Ibid., 35.

⁴⁰"The tragic hero relinquishes himself in order to express the universal; the knight of faith relinquishes the universal in order to become the single individual." Ibid., 75.

⁴¹"By virtue of resignation, [the] rich young man should have given away everything, but if he had done so, then the knight of faith would have said to him: By virtue of the absurd, you will get every penny back again--believe it!" Ibid., 49.

indeed this love for Isaac that makes his act a sacrifice by its paradoxical contrast to his love for God."⁴²

Ibsen takes this paradox to the extreme by placing Brand's action on a level with Kierkegaard's Abraham. Brand's sacrifice of his child is incomprehensible to those who must witness it, both in the play and in the audience. Brand's challenge is to accept Kierkegaard's "absurd." Ibsen's hero should be judged not as a man who acts in the realm of the ethical, but as a knight of faith who becomes "God's confidant, the Lord's friend, if I may speak purely humanly, says 'You' to God in heaven, whereas even the tragic hero addresses him only in the third person."⁴³

Brand's act transcends that of the tragic hero by being one of extreme detachment and renunciation, as he accepts his duty to God at whatever price is demanded. Kierkegaard notes, quoting Luke 14:26: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." The philosopher interprets these words "taken in their full terror in order that each

⁴²Ibid., 74.

⁴³Ibid., 77.

person may examine himself to see if he can erect the building."⁴⁴ While Brand's other acts may seem extraordinary or uncomfortably demanding, child sacrifice places Brand on another level, the inexplicable "paradox" of Abraham--the knight of faith.

In Brand child-death avoids the melodramatic ethos, for the child has no redemptive powers capable of spiritual cleansing like Little Nell, Little Eva, or Little Mary. Brand's child is rather a vehicle with which to test spiritual convictions--the greater the attachments, the more significant the loss, and the more intense the test of faith and devotion. Neither the child nor the child's death is endowed with special powers, but child-death, specifically child-sacrifice, offers complicated ethical and spiritual dilemmas with which to test the hero. In Little Eyolf and The Wild Duck Ibsen sublimates the transcendent potential of child-death; in Brand he uncovers the diverse, complicated results of child-sacrifice, focusing on the metaphysical dimension and avoiding conventionally melodramatic pathos.

The Child as Symbol

⁴⁴Ibid., 72.

By the mid-nineteenth century the child had become a common poetic symbol able to represent futurity or nostalgia; barrenness or fertility; divinity or mortality. Ibsen, a poetic rather than melodramatic writer, often employed verbal rather than visual images of children, and through symbolic evocation avoided the more direct emotional impact of the child's presence. Ibsen, having created two strong child characters, Hedwig and Eyolf, employs the child-symbol centrally and repeatedly in numerous works.

In Hedda Gabler (1890) Ibsen abstracts the child-image further than in his other works.⁴⁵ Hedda, who vehemently denies a maternal function, sarcastically rejects any matrimonial association with her husband:

TESMAN: . . . have you noticed how chubby and healthy she looks? She really filled out while we were abroad.

 Yes, Auntie, it doesn't show very much when she's got that dress on. But I'm lucky enough . . .

HEDDA: (By the glass door, impatiently.)
 You're not lucky enough for anything.⁴⁶

Ibsen's portrait of Hedda's dissatisfaction with her maternal role helps the playwright to transform the

⁴⁵Caroline W. Mayerson, "Thematic Symbols in Hedda Gabler," collected in Fjeld, 133.

⁴⁶Henrik Ibsen, Hedda Gabler, trans. Christopher Hampton (New York: Samuel French, 1972), 16.

child on a figurative level: the child becomes a metaphor which embodies the product of Eilert Lövborg's involvement with Thea Elvsted.

Hedda feels a rivalry with Thea as the two women vie for Lövborg's attention, each considering herself the inspiration for his work. The book Lövborg has just completed, which Tesman describes as "one of the most remarkable books ever written,"⁴⁷ becomes central to Hedda's resentment of Thea, for she had been his companion and supporter during its creation. Eventually, Lövborg loses the manuscript, which Tesman finds and returns to his house. This gives Hedda access, in effect, to Thea and Lövborg's "child". It is a metaphor that Thea senses as well. When, after a night of debauchery, Lövborg returns to Thea, having lost the manuscript, he tells her that he has torn it into little pieces, as he has torn up his life. Thea then confronts him:

You know, Lövborg, what you've done with the book . . . it's like . . . all my life I shall think of it as if you'd killed a little child.⁴⁸

Hedda, a witness to this conversation, realizes how the book connects the two who gave it birth. Ultimately, she enacts the final violence,

⁴⁷Ibid., 69.

⁴⁸Ibid., 80.

exclaiming as she destroys it:

(Throwing a few pages of manuscript onto the fire and whispering.) I'm burning your child, Thea. Curly-haired Thea. (Throws a few more pages into the stove.) Your child and Eilert Lövborg's child. (Throws the rest in.) I'm burning it, I'm burning your child.⁴⁹

The symbolic transformation of the manuscript into a child makes the act of burning paper an act of extreme violence, creating a strong emotional tension by giving a living existence to a literary work. Ibsen establishes this metaphor's vitality by giving the manuscript a significance and value exaggeratedly equivalent to a child.

In Ibsen's powerful symbolic work The Master Builder the child-image functions as a multi-dimensional emblem, embodying barrenness, futurity, and, in an intriguing way, the transcendent spirit which redeems the patriarch. On one level, children, or rather their absence, convey the barrenness of Solness and Ailene's marriage. Before Solness's success as a builder, they briefly lived with infant twins in an inelegant but comfortable home. Shortly after Ailene gave birth, the house burned to the ground, allowing Solness to subdivide the property into small lots and build homes, which were the first steps in his rise to fame as an

⁴⁹Ibid., 82-83.

architect. But the trauma prompted by the fire caused Ailene to contract a fever which infected her milk and ultimately poisoned the infants. Their deaths and her subsequent infertility have been preserved architecturally; both their current home and the one Solness is designing have three nurseries, tiny mausoleums to the dead and unborn, continual mourning places that endow their home with a stifling feeling of sterility and lifelessness. These rooms are later filled by the vital, youthful spirit of Hilda Wangel, who, as this connection with the children underscores, offers a sexual and spiritual reawakening for Solness, yet also provides for a father-daughter bond.

The morning after her first night in the Master Builder's home, Hilda happily reports that she slept "like a child in a cradle,"⁵⁰ prompting Solness to invite Hilda to "be the child here for a while."⁵¹ Hilda brings life to the barren home, replacing the lifeless symbol of the lost children with an invigorating presence. What complicates the strange bond between Solness and Hilda is her description of how, ten years earlier, the young Hilda saw Solness erect a church in her hometown. Ibsen blurs the

⁵⁰Henrik Ibsen, The Master Builder, Fjelde, 342.

⁵¹Ibid., 327.

distinctions between actual event and childhood fantasy as Hilda coaxes Solness into accepting her description of their encounter when he called her "a little princess"⁵² and promised to return in ten years to give her a kingdom, and as she describes how he "held me in both your arms and bent me back and kissed me--many times."⁵³ It remains unclear whether the twelve-year-old Hilda dreamed this encounter, intuited Solness's desire, or if the incident actually occurred and thereby a sexual undercurrent is suggested. While sexual desire is implicit in the redemptive merging of age and youth, male and female, it is conventionally suppressed.

Solness's renewed connection with the youth, vitality, and imagination of childhood provides him with a sense of salvation. A romantic desire to merge with one's opposite is witnessed in Solness's longing for what is in part a sexual but primarily a spiritual union with his opposite--a youthful woman who embodies energy, desire, and imagination--a union impossible to experience with Ailene. Solness tells Hilda, "You're like a dawning day. When I look at you--then it's as if I looked into the

⁵²Ibid., 330

⁵³Ibid., 331.

sunrise;"⁵⁴ Hilda seems able to play the role of child-savior.

Yet, while seemingly a force of redemption, Hilda ultimately proves the destruction of the Master Builder. Solness declares that the final building he plans to complete is "the one thing human beings can be happy in," which Hilda recognizes as "our castles in the air."⁵⁵ Hilda coaxes him, "I'm afraid you'd be dizzy before we got halfway up," but Solness asserts "Not if I went hand in hand with you, Hilda."⁵⁶ Challenged by his young inspiration, he determines to climb the church steeple as he did in his youth to place a wreath around it. Yet his attempt leads him to his death. He falls from the spire.

Hilda is not a child, and the children in The Master Builder died long before the play's action begins; yet childhood is embodied in Hilda's creative energy and insight as polarized against the aging Solness. That she is a young adult makes their flirtation less shocking, but the invocation of their earlier quasi-sexual encounter establishes a sensual dimension to this bonding of extreme

⁵⁴Ibid., 357.

⁵⁵Ibid., 379.

⁵⁶Ibid., 379.

opposites. In The Master Builder the lost children and the loss of childhood are powerful images which torture and tempt the adults. Although no children appear onstage in The Master Builder, their presence and absence are constant and forceful.

In his work Ibsen undermines the conventional and superficial images of children in drama that had distorted and simplistically reduced the early romantic image. As a poet, he revitalizes the imagistic potential inherent in the child, recapturing previous romantic concepts such as the union of opposites through the pairing of youthful, creative energy with experiential wisdom and intellectual insight.

Although not precisely a melodramatist, Ibsen makes use of melodrama in theme and technique. It is the moral universe of melodrama which Ibsen rejects, particularly the possibility for adult redemption by a sacrificial child. While he does not challenge the portrait of the spiritually sensitive child, he does deflate a world in which adults can be redeemed. The falseness of the melodramatic doctrine so prominently and vehemently portrayed in Uncle Tom's Cabin, East Lynne, and Ten Nights in a Bar-room is denied by Ibsen: the possibility of redemption through Christ-like

sacrifices is explicit in melodrama, but there is no redemptive transformation possible in Ibsen's world. He exposes his characters by focusing on the gulf that exists between their ideals and the reality of their lives. Thus, while finding poetic uses for the child-symbol, he also alters and undermines conventionalized child-images.

CHAPTER 5
CHILDREN IN TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY DRAMA

In the hands of nineteenth-century writers, children are often the prey of malevolent forces. In melodrama evil is made visible through malicious characters and social corruption. But at the end of the century, children are abused by strange, mysterious, and invisible forces. Turn-of-the-century children often embody the suffering of humanity, the least deserving victim of the malevolent powers at work in the universe. The child's lack of experience and comprehension separates it from adults who have had time to participate in life and be corrupted by it. Children thus become not only the most helpless prey, they remain the most inexplicable victims. This chapter examines the place of the child in late nineteenth-century works, ranging from symbolist plays to dramatic fantasies.

The Victimized Child in Symbolist Drama

The image of the victimized child takes an oblique turn in Maeterlinck's Death of Tintagiles (1894).

Nevertheless, the child--struggling for survival in an incomprehensible world where death is omnipresent and life a nightmarish journey--remains a central figure. Like Dickens's children, Maeterlinck's young boy forcibly undergoes physical and psychological horrors. Yet Maeterlinck's play contrast with Dickens's epic novels and the episodic adaptations in which the child momentarily experiences peaceful interludes. Tintagiles is pursued and persecuted without reprieve. Moreover, Tintagiles's persecutor is a mysterious force that demands his life, not a social problem that callously abuses him. Stripping his drama of a social context, Maeterlinck creates a frightening picture of the cosmic forces which ravage young life.

There are melodramatic elements in Maeterlinck's symbolist work: the gothic castle tower, the polarities of the innocent victim persecuted by a relentless villain, and audience identification with the hero's struggle. However, Maeterlinck's dramaturgical techniques cultivate the horror without succumbing to sheer emotional thrill. The work is far more sophisticated than its melodramatic counterparts, and, while utilizing certain conventional motifs, it transcends their traditional usages. In its stylistic and thematic innovation,

Maeterlinck's play exhibits many interesting parallels with Henry James's short story The Turn of the Screw (1898) which, like Maeterlinck's work, employs gothic motifs in order to evoke a mysterious world inhabited by ephemeral figures.¹

In both works a surrogate mother-figure--in Maeterlinck's play it is the eldest sister Ygraine and in James's story a governess--assumes responsibility to protect the helpless child. In both, the young woman assumes the role of family protector, attempting to build a fortress from which hostile realities--particularly sex and death--are banished. This fabricated childhood realm is opposed by suppressed and sinister forces which in The Turn of the Screw are represented by the ghosts of Miss Jessel and Peter Quint and in The Death of Tintagiles by the Queen, the boy's grandmother, and her servants. And in both the surrogate mother is willing to risk everything to confront the evil forces, while refusing to recognize the inexorable drive which impels these powers to destroy the

¹The Turn of the Screw has proven to be adaptable to stage and screen, transformed into an opera by Benjamin Britten in 1954 and filmed in 1962 as The Innocents with Debrah Kerr and Michael Redgrave with a screenplay by William Archibald and Truman Capote. Amy Irving was the governess in a 1988 television version.

child.² Thus the movement and rhythm of both works is similar as they depict a love which desperately musters all its energy and risks everything to confront the full potential of death--a futile battle that must inevitably be lost. Both writers render it as a woman's struggle because the life-giving function brings the female closer to the moment of life and of death; consequently, Ygraine embodies the matriarchal life-giving factor while the fairy-tale figure of the monstrous queen, Tintagile's grandmother, represents the irrational impulse to destroy new life.

Hidden deep inside the upper reaches of a tower in an old castle, the Queen sends her servants out to retrieve her victims. When Tintagiles is informed that he is the next victim, a battle ensues in which the forces of life and death struggle for possession of the child. Like all helpless children, Tintagiles is bewildered by the machinations of the world which surrounds him and is confused by the

²Bettina Knapp sees the dying complex as central to Maeterlinck's work and in discussing this drive links it to Beckett's work. "Both dramatists experienced a profound sense of metaphysical despair and futility, a concern for linear time (the years allotted to man on earth) as opposed to cyclical or eternal (cosmic) time. They felt a desperate need to hope (symbolized at times by the child image), to wait for some illusory salvation to earthly anguish." Maurice Maeterlinck (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1975), 50.

messages he receives when summoned by the Queen's underling's. A struggle ensues between women over the life of the young boy, with the younger women fighting to save his life and the malicious older power battling to destroy it. His sister tries to explain and to put the boy's mind at ease, promising that the family will watch over him. This familial protection makes Tintagiles's plight distinct from other helpless children, for he is not alone in his battle for his life; his family's protection, however, does not insure his safety.

Despite his sister's care, Tintagiles is pale and sickly; his sensitive nature intensifies his suffering, making him older than his years. Ygraine describes him as he sleeps:

He seems a little pale, a little ailing too. He was tired by the journey and the long sea-voyage. Or else the atmosphere of the castle has startled his little soul. He cried for no cause. I rocked him to sleep on my knees; He sleeps very gravely, with one hand on his forehead, like a sad king.³

The sisters attempt to decipher the signs that indicate a threat to their young brother. When they determine that Tintagiles is the next chosen victim, they decide that their only course of action is "the

³Maurice Maeterlinck, Death of Tintagiles, collected in The Plays of Maurice Maeterlinck v. 2, trans. Richard Hovey (New York: Herber S. Stone, 1902; reprint ed. New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1972), 209.

one with which we have always succeeded! . . . Let us wait upon our knees as the other times. . . . Perhaps she will have pity."⁴ But as she speaks, Ygraine's tone becomes more vicious and less tolerant,

She has been there for years in her huge tower, devouring our beloved, and none, not one has dared to strike her in the face In the time when there were men here, they feared too, and fell upon their faces. . . . Today it is the woman's turn; It is time to rise at last.⁵

Although Tintagiles has little conscious understanding of the machinations of the world, he intuits his doom. His sister Bellagere carries him, pale and crying, while Ygraine, to divert him, suggests they play a game; but in the face of death the joyless boy has lost his childish impulses and declines. While the sisters try to inspire hope and life in him, Tintagiles feels a sense of kinship with the elderly Aglovale who has accepted the inevitability of his doomed fate. Both are highly sensitive and perceive incipient danger before it sets in, for, as the invidious energies approach, Tintagiles faints and Aglovale rises quickly toward the door with his sword in hand, at which point the sisters clasp and kiss the helpless boy.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

The menacing presence thrusts the door open, causing Aglovale's sword to break, but at this point Aglovale, Ygraine, and Bellagere successfully close the door. For the moment, like James's governess, Ygraine can believe, "He is saved!" But as happens with the governess, a belief in their success causes the guardian-figure to relax their vigilance, permitting the Queen's handmaids to enter. The female servants find the young boy clinging to his protectress, having entwined himself in her hair, an image which conjures up a womb:

FIRST HANDMAID: We shall not succeed in
opening his hands the least .
. . .

SECOND HANDMAID: They plunge to the very depths
of his sisters' hair. . . .

FIRST HANDMAID: He clenches a golden curl
between his little teeth. . .
. . .⁶

And later they describe:

FIRST HANDMAID: You will have trouble
untangling their limbs. . . .

SECOND HANDMAID: True; they are intertwined
like those of the drowned. . .
. . .⁷

To disengage him from the sisters' protective embraces, they must cut the hair which encircles him and continues to cover him as they steal the boy

⁶Ibid., 224.

⁷Ibid., 226.

away.

The final scene parallels the final confrontation in Turn of the Screw in which the governess confronts the ghost of Miss Jessel. However, Maeterlinck's battle is more protracted and more clearly futile. Having followed a path of golden hair, Ygraine's quest ends at a great iron door behind which she hears the faint knocking and cries of her little brother. The drama reaches a tragic pitch as the boy pleads for her to save him and she remains on the other side of the impassable and inscrutable iron door. Ygraine hears his cries as he pleads for her to rescue him:

I see nothing . . . but I hear . . . oh? I am afraid, sister Ygraine, I am afraid! . . . Quick, quick! . . . Open quickly! . . . for the love of the dear God, sister Ygraine!⁸

Pull! Pull! Thou must pull! She is here! . .
 .if thou couldst open it a little . . . just a little . . . I am so tiny!⁹

 She . . . she is taking me by the throat. . . .
 She has put her hand on my throat Oh! oh!
 sister Ygraine, come here.

Finally "the fall of a little body is heard behind the iron door."¹⁰ By removing Tintagiles's presence, and showing only Ygraine's suffering,

⁸Ibid., 231.

⁹Ibid., 232.

¹⁰Ibid., 234.

Maeterlinck intensifies the emotional fervor, increases the horror, but avoids employing shocking visual details. The playwright also shifts the focus from the boy's suffering to the effect of that suffering on his sisters and the audience.

In the final moments Ygraine, exhausted and embittered, questions her silent rival and pleads though hope is futile. Finally, her passionate jealousy overwhelms her:

He is so young, he is so beautiful, and he is so little He puts his little arms about your neck, his little mouth on your mouth; and God himself could resist no longer.¹¹

Ultimately she succumbs to the realization that her implacable female rival has won the battle for the young boy's life.

A child, without means of self-protection, is too young and too inexperienced to defend itself from malicious forces; consequently, threatened and bewildered the youngster passively suffers. For the surrogate mother-figure the child's helpless innocence evokes not only maternal concern but elicits sexual desire. As in East Lynne, the women are passionately aroused by the young boy's helpless innocence. The boys are not sexually charged characters, rather sexual longing accompanies the

¹¹Ibid., 235.

maternal battle with death, evoking a strange quality of jealous passion rarely found in nineteenth-century women. The children, on the other hand, do not battle but abandon the struggle for life to others who energetically take up the cause.

Escape from Childhood

In nineteenth century melodrama the victimized child, isolated from the family's protective care, still upholds the image of the family as the ideal social unit based on respect for parental authority: "Thou shalt obey thy mother and father." However, by the turn of the century writers began to attack the bourgeois family and question adult authority. Those who denied the validity of bourgeois values often portrayed the child as a victim of the family, a macabre and sad picture. Interestingly, a correspondence exists between who attacks on bourgeois values and experimentation in dramatic technique. Whereas most melodramatists staunchly defended the values of their audience, writers like Frank Wedekind and Gerhart Hauptmann challenged those ideals on both thematic and dramaturgic levels.

Oliver Twist and Topsy escape a cycle of physical

and emotional victimization through being adopted by substitute parents, thereby becoming members of a middle-class family; for Little Nell, however, death--or more accurately spiritual ascension--is an escape. The implicit message in the latter work is that Nell, too pure to survive in the corrupt world of adults, has found her true family among celestial beings. In the plays of late nineteenth-century dramatists, the opportunity for redemption is denied and the psychological options, particularly the possibility of hope, are cut off. The victimized child of melodrama can believe in rescue vis-a-vis middle-class values--family and/or heaven--but there are no saviors when family and God prove to be the victimizers. If escape through spiritual transcendence glorifying the child is no longer possible, then the child's only alternative to suffering is the final option of those in ultimate despair--suicide, a subject which is central to two powerful fin-de-siècle works which expose the hypocrisy of bourgeois values: Hauptmann's The Ascension of Hannele and Wedekind's Spring's Awakening.

The Ascension of Hannele (1893) depicts a violent example of child abuse by a family member who should be caring for her. Structurally, the play weaves

its way between the objective world and the dream world. The young Hannele's mother has recently died from the violent beatings inflicted by the drunken step-father. Hannele's oppressive situation leaves her feeling that she has no escape from the violence except through death, and the play begins as the little girl is brought to the poorhouse from the frozen pond in which she has tried to drown herself. The doctor's examination reveals that her body is covered by the welts and bruises caused by her step-father's lashings. The police superintendent prompts one of the local men to explain her plight:

Nine o'clock at night he'd chase her out of the house--even in weather like we got today--so she'd bring some money home. For him to go and guzzle it up, of course. And where would a girl like that find five groschen? So, many a time she spent half the night outdoors--Because if she got home and no money--people came running from all around, that's how she screamed--howled, you might say.¹²

And when Dr. Wachler "carefully opens her shirt at the throat" he notes, "It seems her whole body is covered with marks,"¹³ to which Seidel acknowledges, "That's how the mother looked when she was lying in her coffin."¹⁴ The girl's terror of her step-father

¹²Gerhart Hauptmann, Hannele, collected in Five Plays by Gerhart Hauptmann, trans. Theodore H. Lustig (New York: Bantam Books, 1961), 177.

¹³Hannele, 179.

¹⁴Hannele, 179.

is so extreme that in her feverish semi-conscious state she insists to her adult caretakers, "I don't want to get well."¹⁵ Instead she longs for the only tranquil refuge that she can imagine--that of Christ's heavenly realm where she believes her mother now dwells in peace.

During the adults' attempts to nurse the child back to health, Hannele has a series of visions. The first dream provides a glimpse of the terror which she has endured. Her father appears and immediately threatens her, grabbing her by her bedside:

What did you tell the people? I beat you and abuse you? Huh? If that's true you ain't my child. Up with you, get up! You don't matter none to me. I can throw you out in the street anytime.--Get up and make a fire! Are you going? Out of charity and kindness I've kept you in my house. And now you want to loaf on top of it. Well? Get going or I'll beat you until, until¹⁶

The figure of Hannele's mother then appears, quietly offering her daughter a bundle of marigolds which symbolize "keys to heaven." Her subsequent visions assume a sacred tone and include a visitation by angels.

Her final dream is one in which a handsome, darkly-clad figure personifying death arrives,

¹⁵Hannele, 181.

¹⁶Ibid., 183.

motivating her preparations for entrance to the afterlife. A tailor arrives and dresses the little girl in a bridal gown, veil, wreath, and glass slippers. School-children then enter with their teacher and offer a poetic, eulogistic contemplation of the young girl who they had once ridiculed, and then they sing hymns during their procession to the cemetery. Next Hannele is placed in a glass coffin. Finally the dark figure reappears and quite clearly assumes the role of Christ, resurrecting and purifying the girl when he

(puts his right hand on Hannele's head.) Thus I take from you all that is base. (He bends her head up with gentle force and touches her eyes.) Thus I let your eyes partake of the eternal light. Behold with these eyes suns and ever more suns. Behold with these eyes day, from dawn to dusk, and from dusk to dawn. Behold with these eyes all the splendor, the blue sea, the blue sky and the green meadows, forever and ever. (He touches her ear.) Thus I let you partake of the rejoicing of all the millions of angels in the millions of heavens of God. (He touches her mouth.) Thus I free your tongue from its stammering and put upon it your soul, and my soul and the soul of God the Almighty.¹⁷

The final moment returns to reality as the doctor announces her death. On the dream level, suicide for Hannele becomes a beautiful apotheosis in which her spirit escapes the violent reality that brutalized her, allowing her to enter a spiritual paradise. On the level of reality she is a little

¹⁷Ibid., 201.

girl ignored by society, brutalized by her step-father, protecting herself from a callous and painfully destructive world through suicide without redemption.

During the nineteenth-century, childhood's extreme innocence was portrayed as a vehicle of redemption. Yet, as has been discussed with regard to Cenci and The Return of Peter Grimm, the child was not only a source of spiritual purification but could also be a source for menacing and, in some cases, exorcising evil. Hauptmann's Hannele is not only an abused child but one whose innocent spirit is rendered, albeit in her dreams, into a force opposing her step-father's cruelty. During her final vision in which she is transfigured, the townspeople unite in benediction and then begin to accuse the father of having murdered this young innocent. When Mattern arrives home drunk, abusively calling for his daughter, he is startled to find the silent mourners assembled there. When the Christ-like stranger points to the girl who lies beatifically in her coffin, Mattern is shaken and guiltily denies that he caused her any harm.¹⁸ In the manner of a Greek chorus, the assembled townsfolk, with increasing volume, murmur then chant "murderer" as Mattern

¹⁸Ibid., 199.

repeatedly denies he has abused Hannele. The spiritual forces align with the girl, causing a primrose miraculously to appear in her folded hands. These forces from which the girl has sought protection thus expose her father's cruelty and hypocrisy. He leaves guiltily, crying, "I'll hang-- myself."¹⁹ The young girl's purity enables her to act as a medium for the spiritual forces to expose the evil presence and purge it from the community. Ultimately, however, Hauptmann devalues this spiritual potential by returning to the bitter frame of reality where cosmic forces are not shown to be so benign or compassionate.

Suicide as a chosen alternative to the base reality of life is also an important dimension of Wedekind's Spring's Awakening (1891). However, Wedekind gives the child's world as well as that of the adults a far more ironic cast than did many contemporary authors. The children in Spring's Awakening are more closely related to the early Blakean-Romantic image of the natural child than to the later popular image which reduced the child to a superficial embodiment of purity.²⁰ In the play the

¹⁹Ibid., 200.

²⁰Elizabeth Boa, The Sexual Circus: Wedekind's Theatre of Subversion (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 34.

youngsters are natural, operating on the more complex dimensions of human instincts, including, as Blake had also acknowledged, the sexual.

Wedekind's dramatizes the transition from childhood to adulthood, poignantly depicting the severe pain of awakening sexuality. Physical longings, however, are not depicted as morally corrupt; instead the drive of the libido is innocent while its conflicts with social and religious mores lead to the confusions, agonies, and perversions in the sexually awakening youngsters. Sexual discovery marks the initiation into adulthood, a journey which destroys Wendlar and Moritz and from which Melchior emerges as a young man. Wedekind is especially daring and sensitively insightful in this comic and tragic work, for even after Freud, the fictional child is generally employed for uses other than depicting sexual longing or frustration, although they are certainly shown as inspiring such feelings in the adults who come in contact with them.²¹

²¹Referring to the twelve-year old Kadidja, Wedekind touches on this taboo subject in Pandora's Box, collected in The Lulu Plays (Greenwich, CN: Fawcett Publications, 1967), trans. Carl Richard Mueller, 127:

HEILMANN: What beautiful hair she has.

CASTI-PIANI: Just look at her feet! And the way she walks!

The play begins on Wendla's birthday as the young girl debates with her good-natured mother about whether she must wear the more austere dress of a young woman or the childish dress of her girlhood. Her mother ultimately acquiesces to her daughter's desire to remain in the garb of childhood, suggesting that Mrs. Bergmann would also prefer her daughter to remain a child and stave off her impending encounter with sexuality and mortality. Yet the young girl confesses to having been touched by the latter.²² The following scene introduces the

PUNTSCHU: My God, that's real breeding!

MAGELONE: (smiling) Have pity on her, gentlemen; she's only a child.

PUNTSCHU: (to Magelone) That wouldn't bother me in the least.--(To Heilmann.) I'd give ten years of my life to initiate this little lady into the rites of our secret cult.

²²Frank Wedekind, Spring's Awakening, collected in Before Brecht: Four German Plays, ed. and trans. Eric Bentley (NY: Applause, 1985), p. 43.

Wendla: Who knows? Maybe I won't be around.

Mrs. Bergmann: Child, child, where do you get such ideas?

Wendla: Oh, Mother, please don't be sad!

Mrs. Bergmann (kissing her): My little precious!

Wendla: They just come to me in the evening when I can't go to sleep. And I don't feel sad, either. I know I'll sleep all the better.--Is it sinful to think of such things, Mother?

boys who, after initial complaints about homework, turn to a topic much more on their minds--sex. Wedekind explicitly links sex and death as Moritz denies to Melchior that his wet dreams make him feel guilty, instead these "stirrings of manhood" provoke in him "the fear of death."²³

While the final scenes return to this theme, the children are victimized not only by biological realities but by the adults--parents and educators--who tyrannize them as they try to uphold social and moral codes. Martha, a close friend of Wendla's, describes the absurd rules her parents brutally enforce, which evoke in abbreviated form Hannelle's suffering. When she added a blue ribbon to her night dress, her mother

pulled me out of bed by my braids. I fell on the floor with my hands out like this. . . .

.

I lay on the floor and shrieked and yelled. Enter papa. Rip! Off comes my nightdress! I head for the door. "So that's it," he shouts, "you'd like to go out like that, wouldn't you? . . ."

.

It was freezing. I went back in. I had to spend the whole night on the floor in a sack.²⁴

She almost humorously concludes, "I suppose they

²³Wedekind, Spring's Awakening, 47.

²⁴Ibid., 150-151.

have fun, though they never mention it."²⁵

However, not all parents are so overtly vicious. Moritz's parents pressure their boy academically, making him feel compelled to lie and cheat in order to stay in school. He fears that were he to fail, "Papa will have a stroke and Mama will go to the madhouse."²⁶ Although at this point his comment seems to be juvenile exaggeration, his premonitory feeling is justified as he later commits suicide when he is not promoted.

Unlike some parents Wendla's mother is malicious. Her life simply conforms to the repressive morality of the times, and it is this moral code which ultimately destroys her daughter. The mother becomes an agent for excessive morality and the issues escalate tragically. First she feels uncomfortable when Wendla's dress is too short; next she avoids explaining how babies are conceived, beginning her discussion with the stork and ending with "To have a child--one must love the man to whom one is married--love him as only a husband can be loved. One must love him so much, one must love him Wendla, as you at your age are incapable of loving ... Now you

²⁵Ibid., 51.

²⁶Ibid., 61.

know.²⁷"; and finally, when Wendla becomes pregnant, she arranges an abortion which leads to her daughter's death. Mrs. Bergmann does not deliberately victimize her daughter; however, her acceptance of the moral order allows that order to reap destruction.

The parents in Spring's Awakening are not the worst exploiters of innocent children; the teachers are portrayed as its most malicious purveyors. Wedekind delays their appearance until the end of the play, instead intimating their presence through the students who complain about them bitterly. When the faculty do appear onstage, they continue to be conveyed through the child's perspective.²⁸ Looking grotesquely cartoonish under portraits of Rousseau and Pestalozzi, they begin their pedagogical rant regarding Melchior's dismissal. Then they rapidly digress to a debate regarding the benefits of opening a window and which one. The scene is provocative as the professors unabashedly pressure Melchior into confessing to having written the twenty-page treatise "On Copulation" to which they attribute Moritz's suicide, ignoring the effect of his expulsion from school.

²⁷Ibid., 68.

²⁸Boas, 34.

Portrayed by Wedekind in the style of children's caricatures, the instructors move from being aggravatingly unjust to brutally hateful. The scene which follows is Moritz's funeral, and the adults are shown in their most malignant form: Moritz's father sobbingly disowns his son, "The boy was no son of mine!--I never liked him--from the beginning;"²⁹ the professor recites a litany of curses, "Debased, deformed, debauched, depraved, and degenerate;"³⁰ and friends sympathize with the parents by sorely castigating the dead boy, claiming it unbelievable that "a child could treat his parents so basely!"³¹ The religious ceremony thus becomes a vehicle for the parents to purify themselves of blame and to be vindicated by the community at the boy's expense.

By grotesquely exaggerating the portrait of adults, particularly in the latter scenes, Wedekind introduces expressionistic, nightmarish qualities that prepare for the final scene in the graveyard with Melchior, a resurrected Moritz, and the Man in the Mask. But the distortion also expresses the child's perspective on adults. By conveying the

²⁹Wedekind, 85.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., 58.

adult world through the child's gaze, Wedekind distorts images in his dramatic world.

Spring's Awakening explores the victimization of children by ignorant and cruel adults, but the play moves further into the agony of childhood, transcending issues of external brutality to capture the agony of the self in transition as driven by sexual awakening. Each child is on the tumultuous edge of adulthood, torn and driven by impulses not previously experienced. Their initiation into the feelings and impulses of adults mark them as children about to lose their comforting fantasy realm and enter the uncertain adult world of sexuality and moralistic pressures. Structuring his play like a mosaic of sexual discovery, Wedekind dramatizes a variety of adolescent sexual explorations: sadistic, misogynistic masturbation in a lavatory; group masturbation in reform school; tender seduction between two schoolboys. The primary focus, however, is the destructive struggle of Wendla, Melchior, and Moritz as they enter the realm of sexuality and death.

In many nineteenth-century works, children die before they encounter their sexuality. When sexuality is a sin and children sinless, adolescence initiates children not only into sex but into sin.

For children as pure as Little Eva, death is a transcendent rescue from the threat of sin and corruption. For Wedekind, however, sex and sin are not equivalent, sexuality is the life force, making Wendla's and Moritz's deaths tragic, unnecessary losses rather than spiritual triumphs.

The contrast between Moritz and Melchior becomes the contrast between accepting and rejecting the life force. Both boys confront the idea of death and both are tempted by life--Moritz is tempted by Ilse and Melchior by the Man in the Mask. Having been expelled from school, Moritz contemplates suicide: "It's better this way.--I don't belong. Let the rest of them knock their heads together. . . . I was an infant when I came into the world or no doubt I'd have been smart enough to become someone else.--Why should I suffer because everyone else was already there? One would have to be a perfect fool. . . ."³² As he reasons out his suicidal impulse, Moritz is confronted by his seductive lost playmate who long ago was initiated into the adult world and now works as a model for artists with whom she lives. Ilse offers to go home with Moritz to "curl your hair for you and hang a

³²Ibid., 73-74.

little bell round your neck."³³ But Moritz denies her offer. Sex and death are intertwined as his rejection of life means an acceptance of death: he shoots himself after masturbating.

Melchior also confronts the forces of life and death on a journey of death and resurrection, like a mythic hero who voyages to the underworld before being resurrected. This rite of passage, as defined by Joseph Campbell in his exploration of the hero's journey in The Hero With a Thousand Faces, "is always and everywhere a passage beyond the veil of the known into the unknown; the powers that watch at the boundary are dangerous; to deal with them is risky; yet for anyone with competence and courage the danger fades."³⁴ Having escaped from reform school, Melchior literally runs into death as he passes through a graveyard. In this netherworld Melchior discovers Wendla's tombstone and is then greeted by a headless Moritz who describes and exalts death, attempting to seduce Melchior into joining him:

We are above the battle--both the weeping and the laughter. We are satisfied with ourselves, and that's the whole story.--The living we despise

³³Ibid., 78.

³⁴Joseph Campbell, The Hero With a Thousand Faces, 3d ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 82.

unspeakably, we can hardly even pity them. Their doings cheer us up. Being alive, they are not really to be pitied. We smile at their tragedies, each of us for himself, and make our observations on the subject.³⁵

Though Moritz is tempted to renounce life after hearing his friend's invitation, the Man in the Mask appears and demolishes Moritz's glorification. "You know quite well that's all humbug--sour grapes"³⁶ and later smugly rejects him, "Your humorist friend is the most pitiful creature in all creation. And the most deplorable."³⁷

Melchior's confrontation with death leads him to affirm life, just as Moritz denied it, and thus he is resurrected, having passed through an initiation by Eros and Thanatos. In his passage Melchior emerges transformed; his new persona is that of an adult, the child is left dead in the graveyard, an empty shell. While Wendla had no choice between life and death, since adults and the moral order crush her, Moritz can choose, but he follows Wendla and the path of death rather than Ilse and the path of life. The Man in the Mask reminds Moritz that he had appeared to him "at the last moment."³⁸ His

³⁵Wedekind, 102.

³⁶Ibid., 104.

³⁷Ibid., 105.

³⁸Ibid., 106.

suicide traps Moritz in an untransformed state, forcing him to remain perpetually a child.

Melchior, by choosing life, metamorphizes into an adult while childhood withers away.

Parents and social institutions both assume terrifying dimensions in the lives of nineteenth-century dramatic children. The brutalized lives they lead are described by some writers in order to exploit the pathos of a situation, in other cases to reveal the hideousness of a social institution, and occasionally to unveil the macabre realities of parent-child relations. The parentally abused children of fin-de-siècle drama is far less tolerant of their abuse than their melodramatic counterparts, seeming to recognize that it is unjust or, at least, that something is out of order. And because their victimizers should be their protectors, they sense that their options are far more limited than other children, for they have no place to take refuge. In Spring's Awakening Moritz writes a letter to Mrs. Gabor, in effect asking to become a member of her family when he feels the imminent rejection by his parents. Mrs. Gabor's denial leaves him with no sanctuary. Feeling abandoned and worthless, he then takes his own life. These children recognize that there is discord in their domestic life whether it

is blatant as in Hannele's home or more concealed as in Moritz's. Parentally abused children are not always passive sufferers as in melodrama, they may be active; but, their action is suicide.

Childhood as Escape

Although completely divergent in structure and tone, James Barrie's escapist fantasy Peter Pan (1904) dramatizes Moritz's tragedy: the child who withdraws from the pain of initiation into adulthood. While his play is spirited fun for the audience, Barrie, creator of this modern myth, considered Peter Pan a tragedy. In Peter Pan, a work developed by Barrie in something like a workshop production during a summer playing castaways with the five young Davies boys, the plight of the child unwilling to grow up and trapped in his own youth, crystallized in Barrie's mind.³⁹

Always infused with imagination, Barrie's works are inspired by his autobiography.⁴⁰ Peter, like

³⁹"As for myself, I suppose I always knew that I made Peter by rubbing the five of you violently together, as savages with two sticks produce a flame. That is all he is, the spark I got from you." James Matthew Barrie, "Dedication," The Works of J. M. Barrie Peter Pan Edition v. 10 (New York: AMS Press, 1975), 3-4.

⁴⁰Andrew Birkin, J. M. Barrie and the Lost Boys: The Love Story that Gave Birth to Peter Pan (NY: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1979) provides many

his creator, quests not for eternal youth; rather his struggle is to avoid adulthood. Barrie promotes childhood for its freedom from civilizing restrictions and its capacity for irresponsible joy but also as a means of avoiding the difficult transition to adulthood where one loses imaginative insight and is burdened with the anxiety and responsibility of sexuality.

The goal of remaining in childhood, as Coveney asserts, is a form of regression. Barrie's form of exalting childhood contrasts with Wordsworth and the early Romantics who glorified the child's spiritual and imaginative potential particularly as a rejuvenative source for adults. In "Intimations" Wordsworth describes maturation in phrases which would seem to suggest the loss associated with growing up in Peter Pan:

Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing Boy

which leads to a loss of divine insight:

At length the Man perceives it die away,

insightful comparisons between the author's life and Peter Pan. But any of even the most superficial, claptrap biographies reveal unending correspondences between his life and work, most prominently his mother Margaret, his older brother David who died quite young, and the Davies family, who all appear and reappear in Barrie's novels and plays.

And fade into the light of common day.⁴¹

But Wordsworth, unlike Barrie, suggests that the loss of childhood's vigor is relieved by the fact that in adulthood one can reflect on this period, helping to keep alive one's spirituality and creative energy.

O joy? that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive!
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benedictions . . .⁴²

By contrast, Coveney identifies in Barrie a "morbid withdrawal towards psychic death."⁴³

If children are to escape becoming adults, they must avoid adolescence and the encounter with sexuality.⁴⁴ On several occasions Tiger Lily, the ball-of-light fairy Tinkerbell, and Wendy, Peter's female companion, jealously and naively confront Peter with their feelings, revealing Peter's

⁴¹Korteling, 132.

⁴²Ibid., 132-133.

⁴³Coveney, 241.

⁴⁴It is interesting, if somewhat intrusive, to recall that Barrie was sued for divorce, like Ruskin, for not having consummated his marriage. A personal but suggestive detail which links Barrie to his youthful hero's fears of adulthood. The most interesting and perceptive study of Barrie which links Barrie's life with his work is found in Birken, see 57, 60, 61, 110, 142, 156, 168-182 for his marriage and divorce.

reticence on the least threatening of sexual frontiers.

WENDY: What are your exact feelings for me, Peter?

PETER: (in the class-room) Those of a devoted son, Wendy.

WENDY: (Turning away) I thought so.

PETER: You are so puzzling. Tiger Lily is just the same; there is something or other she wants to be to me, but she says it is not my mother.

WENDY: (With spirit) No, indeed it isn't.

PETER: Then what is it?

WENDY: It isn't for a lady to tell.

(The curtain of the fairy chamber opens slightly, and Tink, who has doubtless been eavesdropping, tinkles a laugh of scorn.)

PETER: (badgered) I suppose she means that she wants to be my mother.

(Tink's comment is "You silly ass.")

WENDY: (who has picked up some of the fairy words) I almost agree with her!⁴⁵

Moritz and Peter are alike in that they both reject the sexual, avoid initiation into adulthood, and remain trapped in childhood. Alone in Neverland, after the Darlings and the Lost boys have returned to their home, Peter sits thinking in his treehouse. Barrie tells of his hero:

If he could get the hang of the thing his cry

⁴⁵Barrie, Peter Pan, 102-103.

might become "To live would be an awfully big adventure!" but he can never quite get the hang of it, and so no one is as gay as he is.⁴⁶

This glorification of childhood is far removed from the early Romantics; here neither the child nor childhood dies, yet as Coveney recognizes, the avoidance of life can be seen as a form of psychic death.

The Power of Childhood

Barrie's Dear Brutus (1917), a play which like Peter Pan is framed by reality but enters a fantasy world, is a poignant investigation of adults who made critical life choices they now regret. It is also a late example in drama of the child who redeems her father; however in Dear Brutus everything takes place in the realm of the make-believe. Gathered in the dining-room on midsummer's eve, the men and women discover that their host, a puckish little old man named Lob, has special plans for his guests. The affair, an annual event although always with a different guest list, is composed of strangers. Each is puzzled by their invitation, but as they talk, one phrase is repeated: "I would give the world to be able to

⁴⁶Ibid., 145.

begin over."⁴⁷

Several individual character's stories intersect and others run parallel. Two characters, a married couple Will and Alice Dearth, lead particularly empty lives. Will, a painter who drinks and has "no more pretty dreams to paint"⁴⁸ is emotionally hollow, having lost the love and respect of his wife and having found nothing to replace it with. This midsummer's night provides a magical opportunity to relive the past as it "might have been." By walking through the window in the dining-room, the characters enter a magical forest. It proves a magnetic attraction for all the guests except the elderly Mrs. Coade who is completely satisfied with the life she has lived.

As the characters reexperience their lives, many discover the falsity in the myths they have created regarding how their lives could have been better. For example, Alice had convinced herself that if she had married Freddie Finch-Fallowe rather than Will her life would have been gloriously vital and luxurious. When she appears in the forest, she is a half-starved, drunken beggar jilted by the man she

⁴⁷J. M. Barrie, Dear Brutus and Other Plays (New York: Scribner, 1931; reprint New York: AMS Press, 1975), 18.

⁴⁸Ibid., 38.

had glorified.

Will, however, finds his happiness in the forest in the child he never had. He and little Margaret joyously sing, dance, and converse with the imaginative abandon of childhood playmates. In the forest with his daughter, Will is an "uncommonly happy nobody."⁴⁹ The two exist together in perfect harmony. Margaret tells him, "It would be hard for me if you lost me, but it would be worse for you."⁵⁰ And inevitably, when he returns to Lob's house and discovers his daughter, the source of all his happiness, is imaginary, he is devastated.

In Dear Brutus Barrie sustains the vision of the daughter offering salvation to the spiritually void father. Nevertheless, it is not Margaret's innocence or divine insight which is redemptive. The imaginative powers of childhood prove the inspiration for Will's happiness and the unrestrained love of a daughter provides his source of faith in himself. While Margaret is sweetly innocent, her purity is not the primary quality. It is the creative energy and emotional dependence of the child that proves the man's salvation. Barrie sets this redemptive child in the dream world; the

⁴⁹Ibid., 60.

⁵⁰Ibid., 74.

play's return to reality, similar to Hauptmann's Hannele, is a crushing realization.

Melodramatic Functions of Children in Turn-of-the-Century Drama

While melodramatic values and conventions were avoided by many late nineteenth-century playwrights, other writers whose works were initially deemed thematically and even structurally controversial utilize the child in conventionally melodramatic ways. James A. Herne explored new techniques and agendas as a playwright that established him among the foremost writers of his generation. Yet, like Stowe and Walker the child, while underscoring the ethical problem being exposed and debated, heightened the emotional tension to levels of extreme pathos.

Herne adapted, stagemanaged, and acted in the melodrama, beginning his stage career in 1859 as an actor in the Howards's production of Uncle Tom's Cabin to later playwriting collaborations with David Belasco. As he matured and grew more independent, Herne struggled to incorporate serious and provocative issues into his work, leading to his reputation among contemporaries as something of a radical. Nevertheless, he continually utilized the

mechanisms of melodrama for engaging the audience emotionally, most blatantly with the wailing infants of Margaret Fleming.

In his most provocative work, Margaret Fleming (1890), Herne contrasts the treatment of two children conceived by the same father, depicting the inferior position of the illegitimate infant. While central to the moral dialectic by underscoring the distinction between the brutally selfish father and the astoundingly selfless mother, the infants are primarily responsible for emotionally energizing the work. When Philip returns home, after visiting the bedside of his dying ex-lover, he observes the ever-maternal Margaret cooing over their babe. The juxtaposition heightens the callousness of his philandering.

But the child is put to even more extreme use to elicit a plethora of emotions when Margaret is prompted through good melodramatic coincidence--the dying woman is the sister of Margaret's cook--to visit the ailing woman. When she arrives, the woman has passed away, but the newly orphaned babe lies crying in the crib, unwilling to feed and unable to be nursed. While there, Margaret uncovers the truth about the infant's father; she sends everyone from the room and sits forlornly until the baby's cry

slowly climaxes in a piercing wail. Unable to hush the child, she reaches into the crib and holds it. Philip enters and watches in silent amazement as Margaret unbuttons her dress in order to nurse the child.

While the play delves into a controversial topic with a frankness and liberality rare in nineteenth-century American drama, it utilizes a standard emotional formula--the crying child--in an attempt to elicit pathos, pushing it to the limit when the wailing orphan is lifted to Margaret's breast. Herne overpowers the social issues he raises by riding the emotional wave and negating the intellectual problems he poses.

In the works of writers at the turn of the century, children continued to be employed for melodramatic effect. The issues and ideas were far more controversial than the subjects of most melodramas, yet the child retained strong emotional powers. Thus, while being used in symbolically evocative ways, child-characters continued to be exploited by certain writers for emotional effect throughout the latter part of the century. Other writers placed children in the role of victims; however, they are victimized by warped values and energies from which there is no middle-class

sanctuary in which to take refuge. The despotic nature of family, society, and even the universe allows for no melodramatic restitution.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

Throughout the nineteenth century such diverse child characters as the little waifs who cling to mama's skirts in The Factory Lad, the bedraggled orphans in Oliver Twist, and fantastic creations like Peter Pan and the Lost Boys attest to the imaginative range and power that children offered dramatists. As in fiction and poetry, the child was discovered to have a special magnetism for the audience, drawing additional power from the dynamics of their onstage presence. As significant as the child-image proved to be in poetry and fiction, which has been well documented in criticism of the period, the child was an equally vital addition to dramatic literature, an area which has not been explored by critics.

This critical study has been concerned not with styles of performance or biographical details of young actors, nor has it been confined to a particular nation or genre. Rather it has attempted to investigate the predominant types of child characters and their development beginning with

their roots in romantic thought to their early emergence onstage in melodrama through the transformations and re-emergence of the romantic child-image in Ibsen's plays to, finally, the symbolically macabre portraits found at the end of the century.

Melodrama adopted children to nourish its endless need for material which could emotionally engage its audience. Consequently, melodramatists simplified the early romantic portrait of children by sentimentalizing the child's innate spiritual insight which had been championed in Blake and in Wordsworth. The child thus emerges in the role of victimized, angelic waif. Renewed interest in children, as spawned at the turn of the eighteenth century, was reshaped by the sentimentalized notions of childhood as promulgated in nineteenth-century melodrama.

Ibsen, ever the iconoclast, undermined not the notion of the spiritually sensitive child (indeed he seems to have been quite a believer in the special qualities of childhood) rather he attacks aspects of adulthood, particularly the thoughtless destructiveness of parents. However, Ibsen does not polarize the bewildered children against their victimizers in melodramatic extremes; instead, while

showing the comic grotesqueness of the adults' behavior, he evokes tragic despair. From The Wild Duck to The Master Builder, children are tiny pawns in the games of their adult gods.

As dramatists at the end of the century began to explore new dramatic styles, children continued to be cast as victims, but the victimizers become more mysterious and bizarre. Even the children become more bizarre. Although more fully rounded, Ibsen's children are as straight-forwardly pure as those found in melodrama. Yet by the turn of the century purity has become a strange quality and no longer spiritually superior; innocence is more a perversion as is painfully dramatized in Spring's Awakening. Further, Peter Coveney is accurate when he suggests that the final stage of degeneration of the romantic notion of childhood is evident in Peter Pan with its regressive return to an eternal childhood. Nevertheless children are innocent, and if it is the cause of their undoing, innocence is not an evil trait and therefore children are not inherently evil.

While distinctions exist among the child characters throughout the century, they are all united by a propulsion toward death. Ruskin identified the formula for writing lucrative Victorian fiction as,

"When at a loss, kill a child."⁵¹ Even a cursory glance at nineteenth-century literature would seem to affirm Ruskin's view, for children often seem to be introduced for the sole purpose of dying. Playwrights of varying sensibilities, in works ranging from Maeterlinck's The Death of Tintagiles to adaptations of East Lynne, incorporate and often make primary the death of a child. Innumerable children in nineteenth-century drama die, among them Hedwig, Eyolf, Moritz, Wendla, Eva, Little Mary, Little Nell, and several Little Williams; even when they do not die many are threatened with death. One could arguably amend Chekhov's dictum about the gun to read, "If a child is introduced in the first act, it must die in the third." Any comic dismissal, however, neglects the complex need of writers and audiences to experience a child's death on fictional terrain.

In the final moments of the adaptation of The Old Curiosity Shop, the grandfather finds Nell inside an old church seated on a tomb. She knows that she is dying, but he does not understand; finally, she tells him:

We have passed through much, but it has shown how much we love each other. We shall not wander anymore on earth together--my earthly wandering is

⁵¹Ruskin, quoted by Durbach, 75.

over. Grandfather, dear! where are you? There is a mist before my eyes, and all my strength seems gone.⁵²

Many children in nineteenth-century drama experienced that mist, but their deaths were not merely a theatrical means to extract pathos from a situation. The death of children proved to be a source with which to indict a corrupt adult world.

It is intriguing to attempt to diagnose the ailments which afflict these fictional children, for children from the nineteenth-century literary canon rarely die of an identifiable disease. Instead, the illnesses range from impending adolescence to a corrupt environment to a mother's infidelities. For example, a child may die because his or her nature is so pure that it is impossible for him or her to survive in a corrupt world. Others seem to die of adolescence; they are too pure to be contaminated by adult desires. In some cases, while the individual does not die, childhood dies, bringing up the interesting and related issue--the death of childhood--for even when the child survives into adulthood, childhood ends which, in a sense, results in the child's death.

Child death was not discovered by nineteenth-century playwrights; children die in many pre-nine-

⁵²Lander, 58.

teenth-century dramas, among the most famous: Astyanax in Euripides' Trojan Women, the children in Medea, as well as the boys in Shakespeare's Richard III and Macbeth. But in these examples death is a rapid, horrifying moment, rarely lingered on for pathetic, emotional effect; it is a jolting and revolting act. By contrast a dying child in nineteenth-century drama is capable of eliciting a deluge of sobs, and these characters are often employed to that end.

Thus, the most obvious function of children in death scenes in this age of melodramatic sensation is pathetic effect. But, as evidenced in The Death of Tintagiles, the death of a child implies issues more complex than a writer's desire to be heartwrenchingly pathetic. Maeterlinck's provocative work is a thematic exploration of the ambiguous malicious forces which insidiously attack and destroy the child. While the level of thematic and stylistic complexity varies in the many works which incorporate child-death, enacted child-death is not limited to heightening emotionality but can delve into unexplored thematic territory, such as Mrs. Henry Wood's young boy who serves as tormentor and redeemer to his wayward mother.

In an age which witnessed an ever increasing

survival rate among children, it is significant that the death of a child became a recurring and powerful image. As explained in Chapter 2, conditions for children were improving throughout the century in terms of health care, labor laws, educational reform, and civil rights. Although illness proliferated, the general health of the child population improved quantitatively.⁵³ Consequently, Gilbert Cross's assertion in Next Week--"East Lynne," Domestic Drama in Performance 1820-1874 that, "Death scenes had grim relevance in an age when half the population was dying in child-birth,"⁵⁴ is misleading. If accurate, one would expect to find greater numbers of dramatic deaths before the nineteenth century when even greater numbers of children were dying and these indeed would be proportionately higher than in the later period. Death scenes, however, increase as the death rates begin to decline.

Sociologists, also noting this strange relation-

⁵³"In England and Wales [in 1864], it is shown by the returns of the Registrar General, that of 1,000 children born alive, 737 attain the age of 5 years'; whereas, 'from a life table . . . based on the living and dying in 1851, it was found that of 1,000 children born alive, only 522 attained the age of 5 years.'" Robert Baker, quoted by Bayne-Powell, 350.

⁵⁴Gilbert B. Cross, Next Week--"East Lynne," Domestic Drama in Performance 1820-1874, (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1977), 91.

ship, speculate that parents began to allow themselves to become more emotionally attached to their children as children seemed more likely to survive.⁵⁵ However, it is difficult to accept that parents in any century did not bond with their children, particularly women, who begin bonding during pregnancy. While, of course, the degree to which mothers and fathers bond with their children varies, the death of a child must have had a serious impact on the family, regardless of the century in which they lived.

Instead of actual death, I would suggest that the fantasy of child death and the concomitant fear a parent experienced, particularly in a century which maintained in its collective memory the experience of exceptionally high rates of child mortality, was as powerful as the reality of death. While the reality of infant mortality may have preoccupied pre-nineteenth-century adults, an adult in the later

⁵⁵In Centuries of Childhood, Ariès writes, "No one thought of keeping a picture of a child if that child had either lived to grow to manhood or had died in infancy. In the first case, childhood was simply an unimportant phase of which there was no need to keep any record; in the second case, that of the dead child, it was thought that the little thing which had disappeared so soon in life was not worthy of remembrance: there were far too many children whose survival was problematical." (38) He concludes explicitly, "People could not allow themselves to become too attached to something that was regarded as a probable loss." (33)

century experienced the projected fantasy of the random possibility of death, thereby producing an anxiety perfect for addressing or exploiting on stage. Parents in the audience undoubtedly found it a heartrending yet cathartic experience to witness a young innocent threatened with death.

The death impulse in drama, founded on seemingly everything but disease, offered nineteenth-century writers means to explore concepts such as child-murder, the retribution inherent in child-death, and the death of childhood, subjects that had not previously found expression in dramatic literature. Little Nell, Little William, and Little Eva die as part of a redemptive pattern which asserts spiritual meaning in their universe, sacrificial offerings who remain uncontaminated by adulthood and purify those with whom they come in contact. Little Eyolf and Hedwig are, by contrast, sacrificial victims, offerings in a world which does not value their act. Writers often played God with their little ones, considering them decidedly safer in heaven than in the corrupt adult world. Even Peter Pan and Moritz are, tragically, better off having escaped the pain inherent in life.

Purity, like death, links nineteenth-century child characters in the plays. Even the raffish Peter Pan

has been untainted by sexual awakening, and the trouble-making Topsy is good at heart. A drive to maintain purity at all costs was heavily invested in by nineteenth-century audiences and writers, creating a universe which rushed children to heaven. The need to assert childhood's spiritual purity denotes an adult world overwhelmed by a sense of its own corruption. Unable to feel pure themselves, they sought to find purity in their offspring, humanity's source. To look at a baby and see it as innocent is to see one's self as originally innocent.

In the nineteenth century childhood represented innocence and extreme vulnerability, values which were necessary to embody in some human form. The twentieth century has certainly inherited a fascination with childhood, but the image is filled with a gruesome cynicism rather than a redemptive belief. But for generations desperately clinging to a vision of humanity as sacred, the child was the vessel with which to embody such beliefs. Because, as Jung notes, "the mythological idea of the child is emphatically not a copy of the empirical child but a symbol,"⁵⁶ adults could capture childhood and mold

⁵⁶Carl Jung, "The Special Phenomenology of the Child Archetype," collected in Psyche and Symbol: A Selection from the Writings of C. G. Jung, edited by Violets de Laszlo (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1958), 124.

it to suit their own emotional needs. Whether to elicit a good cry or present redemptive innocence, children provided a vital image in the dramatic lexicon of the nineteenth century.

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