Chapter II
THE EXISTENTIAL OUTSIDER:
THE DANGEROUS SEDUCTIONS OF THE PAST

The protagonists of Ibsen in the select plays feel alienated from the existential reality and they want to escape from their guiltful past because of their will and consciousness. They are victims to the dangerous seductions of the past which engulfs the present life of the characters and the future becomes confused. To an existentialist like Sartre, standing outside society becomes a positive value. It is the first step towards authentic living and commitment to freely chosen values, against the self-deception and bad faith of the bourgeois masses.

According to Hegel, alienation is a positive process, an essential stage in the development of self-consciousness in man. Drama often uses the idea of alienation as man’s experience of being acted upon as an object, no longer an agent. A powerful outsider may treat those around him as objects and tools to further his own purpose, a weak or defeated outsider may find himself being treated as an object by others or unidentifiable forces.

This chapter focuses on the guilt-ridden past of the protagonists which plays a crucial role in their life. They find it difficult to relate themselves with others around them and are inclined to hate the atmosphere due to their sinful past and culpability. Those who experience interpersonal alienation, social alienation, existential alienation and self-estrangement feel alienated and stamped as
outsiders. The outsiders perform different roles as reformers, rebels, liberators etc. in their life journey. The ‘self’ feels incomplete until it gets fulfilment. Self-fulfilment is possible only by exercising the free will or by making their own choice in life.

The existential outsider was the chief protagonist of serious European drama in the 1940s. The protagonists feel alienated from themselves due to the indelible mark of guilt on their minds. When the outsider is of a reflective mind, he or she experiences alienation at deeper levels; some outsiders are alienated from the human condition itself. They may experience profound displeasure with the human lot and disillusionment with life. For them, man seems to be placed in a hostile world, destined to struggle against blind forces. Human glory, power and life are all found to be transient and shadowy. In such a vision, the futility and absurdity of human existence weigh heavily on the outsider and he is filled with an intense disgust with man’s life on earth. Christine Gomez points out:

Self-alienation is a state of self-division into conflicting parts which become alien to each other … between the tendencies towards good and evil in man, or between the spirit and the flesh, or between man’s real nature or human essence and his actual existence … or in social-psychological terms between the self-image and the real self, or between the public image projected before others and the real self. (2)
These extremities cause alienation in an outsider and if the self-division becomes extreme, the person suffers from various psychological disorders and may even be driven beyond the border of sanity into the total self-estrangement of madness. This type of lunacy is well portrayed by Shakespeare through Hamlet and he could be viewed as an existential hero.

Hamlet experiences alienation from existence, though only as a temporary phase. His father’s death and his mother’s hasty re-marriage together form the boundary situation which precipitates him into a condition in which he is overwhelmed by a profound disgust with life, an awareness of the irrationality of the universe and a realization of the futility of individual and collective endeavour. Hamlet contemplates his mother’s re-marriage and its irrationality leads him to an absurd vision of the world and he toys with the idea of suicide as an escape from the burden of existence. In his first soliloquy these three stages in the logical sequence of thought appear in the reverse order. First comes the death-wish, his desolate view of the world and the last of all appears the root-cause of alienation i.e. the mother’s re-marriage:

O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix’d
His canon ‘gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!.

(Shakespeare, Ham. I.ii.129-137)
Self-alienation leads to estrangement from God and this can be traced in Marlowe’s Dr. Faustus. The alienation of Faustus is primarily theological in that he feels cut off from the mercy of God. In Elizabethan drama, there are examples of power-seeking outsiders who treat others as objects. The defeated outsider in modern drama finds himself being treated as an object by hostile forces and other individuals.

The outsider figure in the Elizabethan age is predominantly a power-seeker, whose alienation is expressed in terms of his involvement in a power struggle. In Milton’s Paradise Lost, Satan is the power-seeker and Richard-II, Macbeth, and Dr. Faustus are also power seekers. The malcontent outsiders of Jacobean drama like Flamineo, Bosola and Vindice are estranged from society, other individuals and self. In the twentieth century, John Osborne’s Jimmy Porter and George Dillon are the best examples. Late nineteenth century drama presents the outsider as reformer, rebel or liberator.

In the drama of the latter half of the twentieth century, the outsider appears as an absurd protagonist and a defeated figure, enmeshed in an incestuous situation seen in almost all the ages. The protagonist arises most naturally from the nineteenth century elite intellectual attitudes of religious skepticism, radical thinking, social responsibilities, reform and belief in the creeds of creative resolution.
Ibsen's protagonists feel alienated not only from society but from the self itself. They are restricted to choose the system of life of their own free will. As a result they get entangled in their past and guilt. The outsider who takes the role of reformer is assertive and dynamic whereas the liberator seems to be idealistic and impractical. Dr. Stockmann is assertive whereas Gregers is impractical and idealistic. The first is a stringent social critic and he attacks existing institutions and is therefore ostracized by society. He is alienated only at the social level. His single-minded devotion to his mission prevents self-division and self-estrangement. The other type of outsider met with most frequently in this age is the impassioned idealist who tries to impose his private vision of the world around him. Gregers Werle, Rosmer and Hedda Gabler are such people. Invariably, these figures meet with frustration and dejection. They experience alienation at deeper levels and revolt against the condition of human existence. They are on the brink of an existential boundary situation and they might even welcome death as a protest against the anomaly of life.

Almost all the protagonists in the prose dramas of Ibsen are outsiders. Nora in *A Doll House*, Mrs. Alving in *Ghosts*, Dr. Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People*, Gregers in *The Wild Duck*, Rosmer and Rebecca in *Rosmersholm*, Ellida in *The Lady from the Sea*, Hedda in *Hedda Gabler*, Solness in *The Master Builder*, Allmers in *Little Eyolf*, John Gabriel Borkman in *John Gabriel Borkman* and Rubek in *When We Dead Awaken* are depicted outsiders in the family, in the
society and to their ‘self’. They all act as liberators and they suffer in alienation due to their past guilt, get entangled in the illusion and finally they come to a state of realization, but it ends in death in almost all the cases.

*The Wild Duck* is noted for the theme of the outsider. Raymond Williams’s *Drama from Ibsen to Brecht* registers Ibsen’s words:

> The characters, in this play, despite their many frailties, have in the course of our long daily association, endeared themselves to me. However, I hope they will also find good and kind friends among the great reading-public, and not least among the player-folk, to whom they all, without exception, offer problems worth the solving. (56)

As a naturalistic play, it delineates the real problems of middle class with a richly assorted selection of characters, an interesting plot and a high strain of emotion. It presents types of alienation and mental sickness. The protagonist Hjalmar Ekdal is a photographer and has had misfortunes in life. His father was once a businessman and a partner in the venture with old Gregers, the father of Gregers Werle who is a boyhood friend of Hjalmar. Old Gregers cheats his partner when he gets into trouble in his timber trade, and poor Ekdal goes to jail. When he comes out, he is a broken man with a weakened mind. Due to the family’s shattered finances with the failure of his father, Hjalmar has to
discontinue his studies and turns to photography as a profession. Then, old Werle befriends him, after taking care to send his son to a far away town for his education so that he would not be able to trace his peccadilloes.

The Old Werle helps the young man set up a studio and plays the role of a generous patron. Old Werle also supports Gina, his sick wife’s young attendant, by arranging her marriage with Hjalmar to hide his guilt. The sick wife or the sickening wife? Often Ibsen makes it clear that the unimaginative Puritanism and intolerance of the wife are responsible for the straying of the husband. Another wife who could be scanned from this angle is Mrs. Alving of *Ghosts* who drives her husband the Chamberlain, a naturally weak personality perhaps, into exaggerated orgies of self-indulgence by her constant critical review of his conduct. She goes to the extremes in her response to her husband’s ways. She separates their son from the father and sends him to Paris for his education and at one stage, even makes up her mind to separate from her husband and to join the pastor as his helpmate.

Hjalmar is a sentimentalist with many illusions of himself. He suffers primarily from the Atlas complex. It is a state of mind in which a person believes that the ‘world is on his shoulder’ and is unable to deal with what he perceives as endless problems. Atlas was the Greek God literally bore the world on his shoulders. Hjalmar imagines that he is a heroic, selfless person, supporting his hapless father, and also his wife and daughter. His wife, a typical good woman,
without pretenses but with courage and real selflessness, sweats in the kitchen and in the studio. She is a woman of self-effacement does the most complicated scientific work which her husband neglects and actually runs the business. It is very apt to compare Gina with Mrs. Linde of *A Doll’s House* in this regard.

Ibsen positions in his plays like *The Wild Duck* and *Little Eyolf* a character or two who appear to be practical and sometimes even bad in given circumstances though capable of being good given the opportunity and the encouragement. Mrs. Linde seeks a job not because she is financially in dire straits but because she wants something or somebody to live for. She gives up her love in order to support her old mother and her younger brothers. When that job is over, her husband dies leaving her nothing and her brothers go in different ways. She is a skillful clerical worker but she needs somebody to live for. Reviving her friendship with Nora she finds the situation demanding her intervention and she intervenes with the characteristic gesture, marrying the widower Krogstad, her former lover, who has become a crafty cheat because he has no resources, and her help brings the miserable clerk to his goodness.

Hedvig, Hjalmar’s daughter, understands her father’s weaknesses and though he fails her at every turn, bears with him with a patience and generosity worthy of a much older person. She loves him with all his faults. She and her mother seem to take at face value his protestations of his scientific genius and his sweating for them.
Old Gregers summons his son home to participate in a party he gives to make certain declarations about his personal and professional life. Hjalmar attends the party and meets his old friend there. Ibsen’s dramatic technique of stage symbolism is remarkable in this scene, manipulating the lighted and unlighted portions of the hall where the various guests mingle and converse. From his friend’s characteristic narration, Gregers infers the tricks his father has played on him. Being an idealist, the young Werle decides to establish his friend in a healthy, honest life, applying the necessary moral corrections. He is characteristically blind at this juncture to his friend’s real qualities. He imagines that Hjalmar could come to terms with reality with the help of his idealism and turn a new leaf in his life, getting rid of his illusions about his patron. Hjalmar, in his characteristic self-delusion, tells his friend, “My house is a sad one, Gregers—especially after a brilliant occasion like this” (WD 403). It is evident that he aspires for such affluence and pities himself for the exclusion from it after the fall of his father. Hence his feeling of his own greatness in standing by the old wretched man in his misery. Actually, he behaves meanly towards the old man.

That old man works for old Gregers as a near-menial, doing copying for a pittance, and when he sees his old father sneaking out of the place, not having been invited to the party, Hjalmar does not recognize him there. In reality, he never really connects himself to anybody, even in his own family where his wife and daughter pamper him with their faith in him and their tolerance. While he is the family’s white
elephant, he depicts himself as the long-suffering, self-effacing protector of the family. He has promised his daughter that he would bring her something from the party, and the poor girl has been waiting for him till late in the night. Hjalmar completely forgets the promise and returns home empty-handed. The girl does her best to veil her disappointment, but the father does not appreciate it. He grumbles in pretentious self-pity: "What incredible things a family bread winner is asked to remember, and if he forgets even the tiniest detail, immediately he's met with sour faces. Well, he has to get used to that too" (WD 418). The girl tries to smoothen the situation asking him to play on his flute, and he flatters himself with self-denial when he is actually wallowing in self-indulgence by dramatizing the situation: "No, no flute. I want no pleasures in the world. 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" (WD 419). The word "tomorrow" is deadly in its very simplicity.

Ibsen puts this into relief by following this with what happens the next day. He passes the retouching work that he has to complete that day to his daughter who is actually half-blind. In typical escapism, he attends to the self-imposed "sacrifice" of taking his old father to the attic to hunt some captive animals and fowls he keeps there, because once upon a time the old man was a lover of hunting. His emotionalism and his capacity for emotional blackmailing are emphasized in phrases like "as long as my health holds out" and "if only your father can keep his health" (WD 434).
Hjalmar cites his alleged immersion in his project as the excuse for committing his wife and daughter to his own professional commitments. He shuts himself off in his studio alleging that he is involved in his invention. Gregers wants the details of his project and Hjalmar is irritated: “Oh, good lord, don’t hold me to any time-table. An invention, that’s something you can hardly dictate to. It depends a great deal on inspiration, on a sudden insight—and it’s nearly impossible to say in advance when that will occur” (WD 443). Ibsen, himself a romantic, is yet very satiric of the self-deluding romantics. There are some “great” votaries of poetry in his plays who are of this type. By their emotional self-indulgence, Hjalmar, Torvald and others earn the reputation of very sensitive people among the superficial people. Hjalmar endlessly magnifies himself in his own eyes to keep at bay his sense of failure and incompetence.

According to Gregers, “Hjalmar’s house is a poisonous swamp, an insidious plague and a stinking bog” (Ibsen the Romantic 87). When Gregers reveals to him the truth about Gina’s past, Hjalmar is shocked, and it helps him further highlight himself as the victim of conspiracies and circumstances. He gets angry with his wife—proving Gregers’s reading of his character false. Gregers tells him the truth, imagining that he has resources of character to face the truth with equanimity. Gina faces the situation with relative composure and does not dodge the truth or prevaricate:
HJALMAR (stopping in front of her). Tell me—don’t you
every day, every hour, regret this spider web of
deception you’ve spun around me? Answer me
that! Don’t you really go around in a torment of
remorse?

GINA. Hjalmar dear, I’ve got so much to think about just
with the housework and the day’s routine —. (WD 457)

There are other protagonists in Ibsen who are haunted by their own past, but
Hjalmar is possessed by his wife’s guiltful past and he feels that he could not live
in that stifling atmosphere of his home—the home that he has so far seen as his
happy home. He decides to quit. He is all the more infuriated by the marriage
between old Gregers and Mrs.Sorby, his housekeeper that is going to succeed
because the two old sinners have no secrets between them. “Do you think a man
can recover so easily from the bitter cup I’ve just emptied?” (WD 459).

Hjalmar decides that he would quit home. He goes out, gets drunk and
returns to his studio. And to pack, he has to apply to Gina and Hedvig for help.
He continues to nag Gina. Just then, there is a message from Mrs. Sorby on behalf
of her husband-to-be. Old Werle offers old Ekdal a monthly pension of ten
crowns till his death, to be inherited by Hedvig on his death.
He understands that old Gregers is going blind, and Mrs. Sorby seems to suggest that Hedvig’s problem with her eyes, her prospective blindness at a young age, is possibly her legacy from old Werle. Ibsen believes that children inherit diseases from their parents. In *Ghosts*, the young heir of Alving is supposed to be dying from the venereal disease he has inherited from his licentious father. Hedvig inherits her eye problem from her real father. Hjalmar apprehends that old Werle might take his daughter away from him, conniving with Gina. Then it suddenly dawns on him that Hedvig might be the old man’s daughter, not his. Durbach asserts:

The purblind eyes, the deed of gift, the dark suggestion of Gina’s relationship with Werle, which she later corroborates – all the equivocal evidence, distorted by the literal application to life of an inept symbol system, provokes the historiconic self-pitying cry of the self-styled cuckold (92).

Hjalmar is afraid that he is growing into a cuckold and he loses respect for the family and in the society. His loud protestations of his worries regarding her suddenly give way to a passionate disclaiming of all concern with her hereafter. The poor child who does not understand the tantrums of her father is bewildered. When Hjalmar has had some time to reconsider the situation of leaving the house, he finds that he can neither leave the house, nor leave Hedvig, nor even Gina.

The acceptable fact is his love for his home, his wife, and above all, for Hedvig and it is so profound that nothing could destroy or shake it. Relling’s
words may not be agreeable that by the time the first grass begins to grow on
Hedvig’s grave, Hjalmar would be able to conquer his grief and would merely
speak of Hedvig in a rhetorical and sentimental manner.

As an “absurd” protagonist, he could not fight against his fate and the fate
comes in the form of Werle and his son, Gregers. Hjalmar’s life is based on the
happiness of Gina and Hedvig. But Gina’s sinful past life with Werle disturbs the
present state of Hjalmar. Werle expiates for his past affair by gifting ten crowns
per month, but this disturbs the present and future of Hjalmar. Whenever he looks
at his daughter, he is reminded of Werle and his losing of eye sight.

Now Hjalmar is left with restlessness and depression. At the same time he
lacks self-realization and self-actualization. He is pushed to the state of alienation,
which gives him extreme anguish.

While thus stripping of Hjalmar of his romantic pretensions, Ibsen presents
a corresponding phenomenon. The old rapscallion, having taken the decision to
take for his wife a fellow sinner, suddenly becomes capable of acts of reparation.
He tries to make at least small amends for the ruin of the Ekdal family by offering
the wretched old man, a substantial monthly pension to pass from him to Hedvig on
his death. It is obvious that this is his covert admission of his paternity of Hedvig.

The moral rehabilitation of sinners of the past is another important
character trait in Ibsen’s drama. People who appear bad in the light of their present
actions turn better when they get some moral support for a better life. Ibsen repeatedly shows the pretentiously romantic characters as weak people who delude themselves with their grand postures and then learn of their clay feet.

Krogstad of *A Doll’s House* is a case in point; when his lover of the past offers him her hand, he forgets all his problems and withdraws all his plans against Nora’s domestic happiness. Nora appears initially as the selfless heroic loving wife, presenting her husband in the light of a deluded idealist (which indeed he is) and sneers at her friend Mrs. Linde for walking out on her lover when she got a rich husband. But it is evident later that Mrs. Linde did it because she wanted to help her family and the old man instead of living for herself and her love. When her husband dies leaving her nothing, she wants a job, but even more important, she wants a job so that she could again live for somebody, something. Ibsen repeatedly insists on the hollowness of people with romantic pretensions and underlines the real goodness of people who appear outwardly capable only of badness. Old Werle is a sinner, and he chooses a wife whose track record is not romantically inspiring. The new relationship, however, is based on the value that young Werle insists on; keeping no secret between husband and wife. And he extends a helping hand to the people whom he has harmed in the course of his life.

Relling becomes one of the important commentators on the scene now. He watches Hjalmar’s writhing about in his agony, and he is not impressed by his self-pitying and self-justifying gestures. He believes that he is a rank egoist who
would very soon put himself at the centre of Hedvig’s misfortune and try to gain attention and sympathy for himself out of the child’s misfortune. When Gregers asserts that Hjalmar would acknowledge the “claim of the ideal” and forgive his wife and establish his family life on the basis of complete honesty, Relling denies the possibility completely. Also, he points out the failure of Gregers: he has an inflamed conscience and he is a stupid who interferes in others’ work. The hollowness of Hjalmar’s character is evident from his behaviour in the presence of the elite guests at the Werles’ party. Gregers is incapable of understanding the weaknesses of human character. His clumsiness is symbolically presented by the mess he creates in Hjalmar’s studio by flooding the room with ashes from the fire and pouring buckets of water to clear the mess and aggravating it. This is what he succeeds by intervening the peaceful life of Hjalmar. This is really Gregers’s effort to make amends in a high-handed and puritanical way for the sins of his father. It is Gregers’s superior attitude (which his father suggests he has inherited from his mother) that causes his separation from his father. His loathing for his father is a complex psychological ailment:

Its cause is obviously not the mere name but the fact of having been named by his father and with his father’s family name. Disgust with parentage, together with self-disgust with things as they are in contrast to the ideal and absolute, provides the violence of feeling here. (Gomez 88)
Gregers’s disastrous meddling with his friend’s married life is the work of a blind man. One tends to agree with Mary McCarthy in her introduction to Christiani’s translation of *The Wild Duck of Henrik Ibsen*, “Gregers represents only the eternal interfering busybody, but this reduces the play to a platitude—an object lesson in what happens when an outsider tries to tell married people how to run their lives” (185).

The role of Gregers can be associated with the role of Parson Manders in the life of Mrs. Alving of *Ghosts*. The hollowness of theorists is emphasized by Mrs. Alving’s partiality for books on path breaking theological controversies. Deciding that to insure her new building would be an expression of lack of faith in God’s capacity to protect good work, she fails to insure the building, and in the night before the inauguration and dedication of the building it is burnt down by the negligence of a carpenter.

One may not go all the way with the old sinner when he rebukes his son in his party: “Now you’re going round suspecting that sort of thing, digging up all manners of old rumours and slanders against your own father. Now listen, Gregers, I really think that at your age you could occupy yourself more usefully” (*WD* 406-407). Yet, he is right that his son is creating problems for others by his meddlesomeness and that he could make himself more useful by minding his own business.
The old man’s diagnosis that his son is a neurotic who has inherited the
diseased conscience of his mother seems to be quite close to the mark. When his son
satirically responds that he must find a cure for his sick conscience, the old man
comments with finality: “It’ll never be sound. Your conscience has been sickly from
childhood. It is an inheritance from your mother, Gregers – the only inheritance she
left you” (WD 450). Relling is so disgusted with the role that Gregers plays in the life
of the Hjalmars that he wishes that Gregers should have perished in one of the mines of
Hoidal. Gina calls him “a pig”; and Relling identifies him as “the carrier of a plague
which will eventually infect the whole household far more insidiously than the
corruption of their fallen natures” (Ibsen the Romantic 87). This way the people around
Gregers affirm that he is a person of a queer nature.

Durbauch comments on Gregers’s trait of idealism: “After infecting Hjalmar
with the cant phrases of idealism and the image of his marriage as a swamp of deceit,
the truth-telling analyst merely devastates where he hopes to cure” (91). To the end
Gregers seems to be impervious to the harm he has done to the Hjalmars. He is an
inveterate believer in the claims of idealism and he is certain that Hjalmar is a superior
kind of man and after the upheaval in his mind on finding the truth he would set up a
new and gloriously honest life with his wife. He pays a tribute to the maiden aunts of
Hjalmar who brought him up with idealism. Similarly, Tesman of Hedda Gabler is
raised by his two idealist aunts, especially Aunt Juliana Tesman; a noble lady
contributes her major wealth for the betterment of Tesman’s life.
When Hjalmar resolves to leave home, Gregers tries to persuade him to stay and rebuild his life, and talks to him of his mission of invention and then he is shocked to hear his response, forcing him to realize that Hjalmar is incapable of anything great. Disapproving of Relling’s reading of Hjalmar’s character, he says that if he were right, life is not worth living. After learning of Hedvig’s suicide, he confirms that his destiny is “to be thirteenth at table” (WD 490). There is just the hint of a possibility that he may eventually become aware of his effect on other people and their lives. To himself, Gregers is a Christ, to others a Judas. Gregers actually was thirteenth, or at any rate one of thirteen, at table. Errol Durbach opines that Gregers to, “… a form of self-administered therapy to assuage his guilty conscience, to save Hjalmar from the evil manipulative control of old Werle, and transform the fallen world of lies and illusion into an effluence of truth and reality” (88). But actually he does not understand other people and their ways.

Gregers lives in a world of his own—like Hjalmar—and he imagines that he could make people live in the way he thinks right for them. He assumes that he is a reformer but one could not reform anybody when one acts on the basis of ignorance of human nature and human realities. He takes the people concerned on a journey into the past and brings that past to life in a destructive way. No healing purpose is served. In the thickness of his ignorance he becomes a comic figure but his actions lead to tragedy.
Though the play concentrates on so many sub-plots like the revelation of illegitimate birth and true parentage, inherited disease and actual suicide, it focuses on the action of an outsider and his impact on the other characters. The reformer outsider’s abstract ideals are put to test in action and they are found wanting.

The outsider helps others to travel to the past and registers its inevitability in the present. Ibsen uses the retrospective technique to effect this. He serves as a tragic-comic figure in the play who is essential to keep the play’s pathos under control. His behaviour and dialogue arouse laughter and an undercurrent of irony is brought in.

Structurally speaking, the play centers on the outsider as its main plot through the retrospective technique, imposed heavily on the symbol of the wild duck in its various stages. Old Ekdal, Hjalmar and Gina represent the hurt wild duck which has been tamed to a domestic existence. Gregers is identified as a dog which rescues the wild duck, but in the end no one likes his intervention. He identifies himself as a saviour, rescuer of deceptive lives, but the vision is built on falsehood.

Gregers compares Hjalmar to the wild duck, and himself to the clever dog which is capable of bringing the wounded duck back to the surface. In other words, Hjalmar is ignorant of the facts about Gina’s life, and Gregers makes it his purpose to open Hjalmar’s eyes to these facts. The wild duck thus becomes a symbol of Hjalmar’s life of ignorance or his life of illusion, while the clever dog symbolizes Gregers who has resolved to awaken Hjalmar to reality and to make him accept the claims of the ideal. A life of ignorance is an
imperfect and insufficient life. Hjalmar leads this incomplete and unsatisfactory life because of his ignorance of Gina’s past. Thus, in this respect also, the wild duck, which is lame and has a damaged wing, symbolizes Hjalmar’s incomplete and inadequate life.

It is clear, in spite of the surface dissimilarity, Gregers and Hjalmar are very much of the same nature. Hjalmar is no ideal-monger; he is a mere sentimentalist and is selfish. He forgets Hedvig’s bad eyes once she begins to take care of the duck. Gregers is no idealist either, in fact. He does not try to expose the whole truth hidden in Hjalmar’s marriage. It is not Gregers but Mrs. Sorby who gives a hint at Hedvig’s paternity, which is the crucial point of Hjalmar’s despair. Gregers even tries to stop Mrs. Sorby when she wants to reveal the fact of Werle going blind. Gregers knows that Hjalmar would not be able to survive this truth. Gregers is not altruistic but egocentric. He shows no sympathy for Gina and none for Hedvig either. He tells Hedvig to sacrifice the thing she values most in the world for her father, but obviously it is for his own sake he wants to kill the wild duck just as he wants to kill himself.

Gregers reflects Hjalmar. It is true that Hjalmar is comic, perhaps too comic, so that he looks pathetic, while Gregers is too grave, so that he comes to look grotesque. But both are considered outsiders who could not achieve what they aspire to and remain outsiders from the beginning till the end.
In *Rosmersholm*, Rosmer and Rebecca are considered outsiders in terms of liberation and reformation. The protagonists, John Rosmer, a pastor, the last of an aristocratic line, and Rebecca West, a young housekeeper in his household, act out a drama of thwarted romantic passion within a tightly controlled structural framework. Rosmer is a creature of his past, the "death in life" of Rosmersholm. To fight his way out to life, to bring light, his own strength is insufficient. While he has faith in Rebecca he can act: but the dead voice of Rosmer's wife, revealed in her letter to Mortensgaard, ends his illusions. He has no choice. Against a past which was dark, Rebecca opposes the ideas of liberation. But the ideas "have not passed into her blood". She becomes simply rapacious, and the ideal of a "pure" partnership with Rosmer in his crusade for nobility, a crusade to which she persuades him becomes an "uncontrollable" physical passion which drives her to destroy his wife. From this guilt there is no forgiveness. From this guilt Rosmer himself is not free; the very fantasy of his purposed nobility, his inherited incapacity to live, is her silent co-conspirator. The freedom which might have been expected when Beata is gone is simply illusory. Guilt, the inheritance of Rosmersholm, has "infected her will". She laments, "I have lost the power of action, Rosmer" (*RS* 570).

Rosmer has been living a life aloof from society. He has got his own mission to liberate the individuals to achieve democracy. He aspires to break free of his strict conformity of conventions and attempts to formulate new values that free the human beings from their conservation. So, he automatically opposes the
views of the Radicals and consequently he is driven to the state of alienation.

Rosmer is found to be an outsider among his former friends, both conservatives and Radicals. The path to idealism always alienates the path from fellow beings.

Rosmer says:

Because I felt it was a problem that concerned no one but me.

And I didn’t want to cause you and my other friends any unnecessary pain. I thought I could go on living here as before: quiet, tranquil, content. I wanted to read – to immerse myself in all those works that once had been closed books to me – to open my entire life to that great world of truth and freedom that’s come to me now like a revelation. (RS 519)

Ibsen establishes a quite deliberate irony between the romantic texture of the action and the ordered restraint of the structure. John Rosmer explores his relationship with his late wife Beata and the way his feelings have developed since her suicide in the millrace. Rebecca West reveals the secrets of her past life with her adoptive father Dr. West and her motives in coming to Rosmersholm. In a way that is reminiscent of *Ghosts*, the action of the past predominates over the action of the present, as the inner motivation and responses of the characters are laid bare.

The outside interventions by Dr. Kroll, a local headmaster, and Beata’s brother and Mortensgaard, a newspaper editor switch on the process of a mutual probing and analysis, including Rebecca’s confession that she encouraged Beata Rosmer to commit
suicide. Rosmer’s return from town in the final act provokes Rebecca to reveal her most closely guarded secret about the nature of her love for Rosmer. Underneath all the neoclassic symmetry, however, the hero and the heroine act out a late romantic drama of passion so deadly that it drives them both into the millrace.

Rosmer and Rebecca are complex individuals and their relationship is uneasy, tense and unbalanced by feelings of guilt. Rebecca is a decisive, even ruthless woman who once exploited and manipulated the emotions of both Kroll and Beata to gain access to Rosmersholm and to be near Rosmer. The readers learn how she persuaded Beata to make way for her as her passion for Rosmer grew. The readers also learn how, earlier in her life, after the death of her mother, she had assumed her mother’s role as mistress in the house of her step-father, Dr. West. Guilty fantasies were built into the very fabric of that relationship. Kroll makes it clear that those fantasies had some substance. Dr. West was probably her real father, which means that Rebecca had for years committed incest. Freud points out: “At Rosmersholm she has repeated the same pattern, involving in yet another guilt-ridden relationship with a father figure, Rosmer, after the suicide of a substitute mother figure, Beata, who was the mistress of the house” (75). Freud’s comment confirms Rebecca’s relationship with Rosmer. She always treats him as a father surrogate.

Rosmer also played his part in Beata’s unhappy end by refusing to meet her need for emotional and sexual warmth. His revulsion for her made her think that she was both sick and mad and had no right to be Rosmer’s wife. So she made way for
Rebecca. Since then, Rosmer has lived out a fantasy of platonic relationship with Rebecca, retiring early to his study every night, hoping for restful nights undisturbed by wild dreams and carefully avoiding the bridge over the millrace from where Beata leapt to her death. Rebecca diverts his mind from the pressing thoughts of Beata and enables him to glide along the path of nobility as a liberator.

The self can be freed only if it conquers this past, breaking the “mind forged manacles” (142) that imprison the spirit. Brand cries out in Brand, Ibsen’s ambitious play:

Within! Within! There’s the summons!

There’s the path that we must follow.

In each heart the new world’s fashioned,

Shaped for a new life with God. (Ibsen The Critical Heritage 143)

Like Brand, Rosmer cries out to ennoble his fellow beings. But his ‘self’ is not ennobled enough to strengthen others. “To be wholly oneself! But how, with the weight of one’s inheritance of sin?” (Gasekell Drama and Reality 89). Neither Rosmer nor Rebecca finds it easy to throw Beata’s corpse off their back. Instead, the memory of Beata seems to exercise an increasingly powerful hold for them. Due to the past guilt, Rosmer moves away from the society slowly.
The solitariness gathers momentum when he is burdened with the past guilt. Rebecca finds it difficult to get him back to his expertise. The guilt slowly engulfs Rosmer and his mind is overcrowded with the thoughts of Beata’s death and the white horse. The alienation in the mind of Rosmer leads to a distrust of his own ideals and people. Kroll’s denial of his relationship with Rosmer, his guilt and the fear of society, make his life complicated.

Rosmer feels that he is uprooted from the ‘self’ and the society. One of the forms of rootlessness is self-alienation which in its turn is related to the loss of identity and its quest to get out of its crisis. This theme has become commonplace not only in modern European drama but also in Indo-English Literature. In such a case, Rosmer’s alienation from the world seems to be similar to Sindi Oberoi, the protagonist of Arun Joshi’s *The Foreigner*.

Joshi explores the individual’s anguished consciousness of being alienated from the existing convention and ritual of the society. When Oberoi finds himself “a foreigner” in the foreign land without any root in values and familial binding, he is driven towards utter anguish. Rosmer wishes to break all these shackles and wants to liberate himself from all rankling memories by marrying Rebecca. As Sindi wants to marry Jude, she too wants to marry, but to him, marriage is a formidable undertaking.
Initially, Rebecca is thirsting to marry Rosmer but later she turns away from it. Rosmer develops a symbiotic relationship with Rebecca, restores that relationship by a ‘spiritual marriage’ and strongly desires to have a victorious, guiltless and joyful life. A liberated soul always enjoys freedom at heart and attains inner tranquility. But Rosmer is easily shattered by various guilts on his way, namely, his wife’s suicide, the indictment made by his brother-in-law and Rebecca’s past life with Dr. West.

“To cleanse one’s own mind” (Teachings of Buddha 65) is the doctrine of the Buddha. Rosmer, without cleansing his mind, is ready to ennoble the mind of his fellow beings. This thought echoes Lord Byron’s phrase: “Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow” and it is documented in the words of Bryan Caplan:

The first meaning is obvious; only the people who value liberty have motive to win it. But there is another, more subtle meaning in Byron: Those who would free themselves from false ideas of their society must make their own choice to shift through the contents of their minds and remove beliefs without rational support.

(<http://economics.gmu.edu/bcaplan/atlas.htm>)

The people who choose to rationally question their society’s values are the ones who see the value of individual freedom. The people who value the individual freedom commit their lives to winning it. Rosmer says:
Everyone builds the world in his own image. He has the power to choose, but no power to escape the necessity of choice. If he abdicates his power, he abdicates the status of men, and the grinding chaos of the irrational is what he achieves as his sphere of existence – by his own choice. (RS 735)

Rosmer, by his choice of free will, sets a journey towards self-liberation.

Rosmer’s realization of his ideals exists only in the intellectual plane and not in practicality. When the real test appears, it vanishes in the air. Rosmer is unaware of the conspiracy of Rebecca. He fails to see his inner being and embraces an illusory life with Rebecca. He feels alienated in the family, in the society, and withdraws into his ‘self’. The reality in Rosmer is weakened by the passion for Rebecca and in the end it pulls him into the mire.

Caplan eloquently argues: “Look around you; what you have done to society, you had done it first within your soul: one is the image of the other” (984). This is very true with the case of Rosmer. He is unaware of the happenings around him and also within him. Rebecca is aware of her each and every ‘move’. She is almost like Hedda in Hedda Gabler. She plots against the family members of Rosmersholm, as Hedda does with all men. Everyone is a puppet in the hands of Rebecca. She is also an interloper who parallels the views of Rosmer, being highly trained by Dr. West, her adopted father, in free thinking. She could not live an ordinary life in Rosmersholm, gets attracted towards Rosmer’s ideals, and wants
to lead him, next to Brendel, his tutor. She motivates him in all ways and is indoctrinated by the principle of Rosmer that a heart, which is free of guilt alone can be rooted in victory.

Rosmer’s ideals make her conscious of her guilt and she is enlightened with the thought that, “Happiness, Rebecca dear – more than anything, happiness is a calm, sure sense of being guiltless” *(RS 554)*.

Doubt and fear rule the mind of Rosmer which become the main cause for the deaths of Rosmer and Rebecca. He doubts whether Rebecca could have the courage of Beata and her selfless love is also tested by him. Rebecca wants to embrace death as atonement for her guilt. As an alienated being, Rosmer follows her.

Even in the presence of Rosmer’s wife, Rebecca manages to spend her time with Rosmer. Her domineering attitude numbs the household responsibilities of Rosmer. He loses his capacity to take things on his stride and surrenders to the passion of Rebecca. Both of them wish to do what they like. Lou Salome in *Ibsen Heroines* opines: “Rebecca finds Rosmer is caught up in two things, his God and his life, before she succeeds in estranging from his religious beliefs, she uses this cautiously anticipated change in order to awaken mistrust and unease in Beata” *(RS 88)*. Rosmer and Rebecca interchange their places and Rosmer can be seen as a passionate being.
Ibsen adopts the retrospection technique to investigate the attitude of outsiders. Each one involves in self-reflection by conversing freely and explores his relationship. In *The Wild Duck*, the outsider is solely responsible for invoking the past whereas in *Rosmersholm*, the past rears up by itself through Kroll and consummates in death. The sense of guilt in the past plays a vital part in making a protagonist an outsider. This is very well suggested by the recurrent image of white horses in *Rosmersholm*. In Act II Rosmer refers to the appearance of white horses and it signifies that they are the reminders of Beata’s death which torture him. This is well depicted in the words of Rosmer who says to Rebecca.

ROSMER. Oh, all these wild imaginings! I shall never get rid of them. I’m sure of it, I know it. At any moment they’ll come crowding in on me and remind me of the dead.

REBECCA. Just like the white horse of Rosmersholm.

ROSMER. Yes. Rushing out of the darkness. Out of the silence. (RS 544)

Thus Ibsen effectively uses the connection between the retrospective structure of the play and its recurrent imagery of the white horse.

The impact of the outsider obliterates the course of action in the plot construction, and thereby arises the dramatic conflict as well as the important crisis, climax and catastrophic situations. The past plays a very crucial role in the life of the outsider. It completely alters the idealism and life of Rebecca. Rebecca
is not unconsciously replaying the past scene, as Mrs. Alving in *Ghosts* is, or
reflecting someone else’s present situation, as Gregers is, she is in fact struggling
to avoid the repetition of the past.

Rebecca’s confession apparently comes from her discovery of the
incestuous nature of her past relationship with Dr. West. Rebecca thought it was
simply between a man and a woman. It might have been a kind of passion like a
storm at sea in the ‘Winter up North’ that swept up Dr. West and Rebecca. She is
forced to be a faithful wife rather than a passionate woman, like Rita in *Little
Eyolf*, and wants to be so in Rosmersholm rather than a faithful wife. But having
been a lover to one’s father is beyond Rosmersholm’s conception of life.
Rebecca’s relationship with Dr. West crushes the future possibility of her being
free there. As per Rosmer’s idealism, real freedom needs innocence, freedom from
sins. Rebecca decides to leave Rosmersholm. If Rebecca cannot play the relation
of a man and a woman, she is forced to repeat that of a wife and a husband,
however incomprehensible this fate may be to her. It is true that without a man
there would be no woman, and vice-versa.

Rebecca wants Rosmer to be estranged from his environment and that vaccum
should be occupied by Rebecca. But at last she makes him helpless when she wants to
quit the family. He is estranged from his former self and this enables his new self to
translate itself into a full life. Living as outsiders, both Rebecca and Rosmer travel in the
plane of romantic illusion and the realization comes as a self-destructive one. Because of Rebecca, Rosmer has to choose the path of self-destruction to prove his love.

The past destroys Rosmer and Rebecca in *Rosmersholm* whereas in *The Lady from the Sea*, though Ellida is obsessed with her rankling memories of the past with the stranger, she overcomes the danger with the help of her husband and emerges an empowered woman who is ready to embrace all happiness.

*The Lady from the Sea* is a play shot through with the symbolism of the sea. The sea’s changing state is reflected in the shifting moods of Ellida Wangel. She is caught up in a sickening marriage with a country doctor by name Wangel. Her longing for freedom and emotional fulfilment is symbolized in the play in the figure of a mysterious seaman to whom she was once betrothed. He appears, as if summoned out of the depths of her consciousness, to reclaim his bride. Confronted by his real or imaginary threat from her past, Ellida eventually chooses to commit herself freely to her husband Wangel and his two daughters Bolette and Hilda from his previous marriage. The reconciliation is genuine, but the note of elegiac sadness in the ending is equally unmistakable. The sequences with the mysterious seaman have a dream-like quality foreshadowing the expressionist texture.

The play drifts towards the dull and loveless lives of Wangel and Ellida. She suffers from a severe depression, worsened by her lack of a fulfilled relationship with her husband and his two daughters. She copes with it by taking medicines. He, for his part, cannot understand her depression or her refusal to
sleep with him. Wangel tries to break this impasse by inviting Arnholm, a teacher and an old friend of Ellida to come and visit them. Arnholm’s arrival has the desired effect of breaking up this dangerous deadlock, as Ellida begins to reveal to him some of her secret worries.

The play opens with the introduction of Ellida through Ballasted’s painting a picture of a mermaid and with that he links the motif: “She’s wandered in from the sea and can’t find her out again, and so you see, she lied here, expiring in the tide pools” (LS 594). Ballasted’s comparison confirms the appearance of Ellida in drenched clothes, straight from the sea. The play takes place entirely outside, a contrast to the enclosed living-rooms of Rosmersholm and Hedda Gabler. But this exposure itself is a confinement to her.

The ‘past’ overrules both Ellida and the children. Ellida could not cut herself off from the past life completely and her mind is overcrowded with the thoughts of the stranger. With this dramatic conflict, Ellida is imported into a readymade family. She has become a second wife in a family, still full of memories of the first. Although not a direct threat like Beata, in Rosmersholm, the dead wife is still a barrier, particularly between the two daughters and their step mother. It gets strengthened when the daughters feel reluctant to give her a mother’s place and the position of being outsider is acute in the case of Ellida. Wangel is shuttled between the children and Ellida. He moves between the two halves of his family literally, as the girls always sit on the veranda and Ellida in
the summer house. Dr. Wangel is highly fascinated by the otherness of Ellida, until he is aware of the critical situation. He points out to Arnholm, the teacher that she is not an ordinary woman and she is completely obsessed with the sea. He comments, “I can tell you, the life out there has left its mark on her. The people in town here can’t understand her; they call her ‘the lady from the sea’” (LS 603).

Wangel used to address her as “mermaid” and informs Arnholm that his mind is divided equally between Ellida and the dead wife. But Ellida could not dedicate her life to the family. Once the children secretly arranged a birthday party celebration for their dead mother without intimating Ellida and that makes her embarrassed and depressed. The daughters never consider her as their mother and Hilda refers to her as one who is “a bewitching father” (LS 634). Bolette feels bored to look after her when Ellida is sick. Bolette tells Arnholm, “I can’t think anything else. She acts so strange at times. (Heatedly) But it does seem so unfair that I should have to stay on here at home! It’s really no earthly use to father. And I have obligations to myself, too” (LS 637).

Wangel wisely builds on Arnholm’s intervention and diagnoses the reasons for Ellida’s depression. It seems that it began some three years earlier when she lost a baby. She started to have nightmarish fantasies about a lover whom she felt she had betrayed, a mysterious seaman, possibly a murderer, to whom she had symbolically betrothed herself. In her obsessed state, she became convinced that her dead child’s eyes were those of the seaman. That’s why she refused to sleep
with Wangel. The immediate effect of this confession is a deepening of Ellida’s emotional crisis. It leads directly to the conjuring up a vision from her past which both terrifies and attracts her.

Ellida’s nature is clearly brought out by Fjelde: “Ellida’s nature, in point of fact, is inwardly divided, reflecting in miniature the large-scale geographic division of sea and land” (382). He further describes that Ellida is torn between the sea and the land topographically. The crisis reaches its peak with the arrival of the stranger. The sculptor Lyngstrand mentions the stranger as a man whom he met at sea and he swore to avenge on his faithless fiancée who married another man. Ellida tells Wangel that the stranger was the mysterious lover who had married her and who has ever since been her spiritual husband. She even fears that he was physically the father of the dead child as the baby had his eyes. That is why it could not live, and she dare not conceive again.

Here, Ellida appears an outsider, absurd protagonist who suppresses her reflection of the past and undergoes agony. When the stranger actually appears, she could not recognize him at first, despite having thought about him day and night. He is the focus of her longing for what life cannot offer her. She remains an outsider from the beginning till the end. Ellida has married Wangel without loving him. She expects reckless passion from Dr. Wangel but society’s laws and conventions restrict him. She has an illusion that she would get what she wants from Dr. Wangel, and when it is denied, she disappointed, she starts suppressing
which leads to her nervous breakdown. She is caught in a philosophical contest between two opposing forces. According to Elinor Fuchs, the opposing forces may be, “freedom v. contingency, the Erotic v. Love, the Infinite v. the Bounded: all imaged as an opposition of sea and land” (435). The opposing forces signify Ellida’s romantic life with the stranger in the past and her present life with Dr. Wangel. She is traumatized by this internal conflict.

When Ellida narrates the past, she trembles: “Yes, terror. A terror so huge that only the sea could hold it” (LS 629). The stranger, called Freeman occupies her mind and his figure appears huge and mysterious to her. According to James Leigh, “She is indefinitely the other in herself. That is undoubtedly the reason she is called temperamental, incomprehensible, perturbed, capricious – not to mention her language in which “she” goes off in all directions and in which “he” is unable to discern the coherence of any meaning” (119). As a result, she is not aware of her real “self” and loses her capacity to make decisions.

The Seaman arrives on the last tourist boat of the season. The action of the play moves completely into the sphere of Ellida’s dreams and fantasies. Everything is seen through Ellida’s eyes, including the responses of the other characters and this is a trait of an expressionist dream play. Wangel attempts to assume control over events, dismissing the claims of the stranger as pure fantasy and threatens to call the police.
Ellida and Wangel talk through their crisis, exploring even the most painful issues. Here, Ibsen introduces the dialogic mode where both can interact and confront each other. The same technique has been employed in the case of Rebecca and Rosmer in *Rosmersholm*. Rebecca is transparent in admitting her faults and she is ready to confront reality. Nora and Helmer in *A Doll's House* and Hilda and Mrs. Solness in *The Master Builder* are engaged in such dialogues.

Ellida feels that, by marrying Wangel, she has lost her essential freedom as a human being. She also feels that he has bought her in marriage and she has let herself be tainted in the process. That is why she tries to wash herself clean every day in the waters of the Fjord. Wangel asserts his authority as husband and doctor and advises Ellida that she is not fit enough to choose between her married life with him and an uncertain future with the mysterious seaman. But in a last traumatic confrontation with the stranger, when Ellida relives the worst of her fears and her temptations, Wangel finally gives her complete freedom to choose. But it is a freedom with responsibility. In surrendering his claim of authority over her, he gives unmistakable proof of his affection for her at that point. Ellida is able to choose him for the first time in complete freedom. In doing so, she is able to see how she might relate more openly and genuinely to Wangel's two daughters in the future.

Ellida is an outsider not only in society where she lives, but to her own self. Her inner mind does not relate with reality and she is obsessed with the thoughts of the stranger. When Wangel gives her the choice of decision, that freedom works
a magic in her consciousness and she forever breaks the shackles of obsession with the stranger. Dr. Wangel says: "Your thoughts have gone other ways. But now—now you are entirely free from me—my life—my world. Now you can pick up the thread of your own true existence again. Because now you can choose in freedom—on your own responsibility (LS 685). Responsibility with freedom does a miracle in the life of Ellida. She starts realizing that she is solely responsible for her future which ensures her happiness or sadness. Responsibility always gives power and this is true in the case of Ellida.

She completely surrenders herself to Dr. Wangel and this surrender guarantees safety and peace to her, whereas her future with the stranger is uncertain and unknown. Wangel’s love gives Ellida a feeling of freedom in his presence. In fact, the manic feeling that she is imprisoned has disappeared. To put it in the words of Lou Salome, "Ellida was not forced to be a prisoner: rather she was a voluntary captive of the sickly, exaggerated and unfettered condition of her fantasy world and sought freedom through the limitless and the unknown" (Ibsen’s Heroines 117).

When the stranger appears before her, she could not even recognize him. At that time, she realizes Wangel’s extreme love and care, which restores her health and heals her wounds. As if awakening from a nightmare, she recognizes for the first time what he is really like. With that she celebrates his return into her heart after a long estrangement, while the stranger leaves it, because reality finally
has changed her image of him. She happily accepts Wangel. The realization of being an outsider in society and to herself opens new vistas to Ellida and thereby she relates and connects herself to the family, society and the world.

Ellida experiences anguish because of her past life where she was involved with a stranger. The past life is an obstacle in her attempt to begin a new life with Dr. Wangel.

Ibsen uses the sea as a symbol to depict Ellida, an outsider. She wants to keep away from the family and indulges in swimming to forget her distress. The distress is due to her past affair with the stranger. The sea symbolizes Ellida and the stranger. Her emotions are like the ebb and flow of the sea. The sea dominates the whole play as in Samuel Becket’s *Embers*. In *Embers*, Henry speaks loudly in order to drown the sound of the sea. But here, Ellida immerses herself in the thought of the stranger who looks like sea to her. Her attraction towards the larger sea is far more powerful than her attraction towards her house or garden. The conversation between Wangel and Arnholm obviously gives a picture of the state of Ellida’s mind and how she is allured by the thought of the sea, which is a symbolic representation of Ellida’s mind. Wangel confides to Arnholm:

Haven’t you ever noticed that the people who live out close by the sea are almost like a race to themselves? It’s as though they lived the sea’s own life. There’s the surge of the waves – the ebb and the flow – in their thoughts and their feelings
both. And they never can be transplanted. Oh, I should have remembered that. It was a plain sin against Ellida to take her away from there and bring her inland. (LS 656)

Like the waves of the sea, Ellida’s thoughts fluctuate. She wants to get rid of the thoughts but she could not overcome her emotions.

The stranger possesses the characteristic of the sea and her attraction towards him is very intense. But now, Ellida has no more attraction towards the sea and the stranger. The sea on the surface level attracts Ellida but when she comes to know the dark depths of the sea, she is terrified. Wangel knows her condition very well and asks:

Ellida, your mind is like the sea – it ebbs and flows. What brought the change? I begin to understand you – little by little. You think and feel in images – and in visions. Your longing and craving for the sea – your attraction toward him, toward this stranger – these were the signs of an awakened, growing rage for freedom in you. Nothing else. (LS 686)

Ibsen effectively brings out Ellida’s mind and also the stranger through the sea as a symbol. By this symbolism, Ellida is considered an outsider who struggles to cope with the surroundings of her life with her husband. The sea strikes one as a sulky, dangerous, beautiful and unpredictable element. Even as it pretends to be
the friendliest, it could drag anyone under and kill him. The sea, which symbolizes
the stranger, traps Ellida in a sticky and dangerous net and she finds it extremely
difficult to escape from it. The familiar archetypal symbol of the sea is eternity,
romantic longing, rejuvenation and death but here it serves as the controlling
metaphor for the scope, mystery and complexity of Ellida’s dilemma.

The arbour is a retreat built by Wangel for Ellida and it represents the space
in which Ellida is protected from the intrusion of the outer world upon her inner,
secret life. The spatial areas and relationships articulate visually the existential and
psychological dilemmas of characters. The recollection of the past and the
confrontation with the forces of memory in the present are handled effectively by
Ibsen. Further, it provides space to see the inner world of Ellida’s mind. By
immersing herself completely in this functioning of her mind, she completely
evades the present if at all she participates in it, it is only her partial participation.
This type of reaction gives a queer picture of Ellida among her family members.

Ellida is physically and spiritually immobilized in her present situation as
the wife of Dr. Wangel, her remembrance of her past is her prime factor for
mobility. She retreated into the arbour to escape from her mundane life. In the
early acts, she is physically immobilized in the arbour, alienated from those
around her, and dissociated from the self. The arbour signifies her physical and psychic retreat into a largely solitary existence in the world of memory. Thus, Ellida exhibits herself as an outsider to the world.

Ellida plays with the sea to ventilate her pent up emotions, in the same way Hedda plays with pistols to ease her boredom. Both the sea and the pistols are dangerous symbols. Hedda wants to overpower Tesman, not only him, but everyone in the family.

Hedda, the daughter of General Gabler, is a beautiful woman with an elegance and refinement which make her seem like a being from a higher sphere. This attitude in her makes her act like an outsider in the family where Tesman and his aunt are hurt by her so many times. After her father’s death she is aware that she is rapidly passing through marriageable age and Tesman has prospects and could offer her a status and position in life. She could see advantages in the marriage too. But no one and nothing in her domestic new life suits her whereas they all suit each other very well.

Ibsen underlines in one of his letters: “Jorgen Tesman, his old aunts and the faithful servant Berta together form a picture of complete unity. They think alike, they share the same memories and have the same outlook on life. To Hedda, they appear like a strange and hostile power, aimed at her very being” (McFarlne, The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen 120).
Even in the introduction of Hedda on the stage, her appearance and her manner emanate coldness. In the stage direction, her eyes are described as “steel grey with unruffled calm” (*HG* 702). And in her later directions, indicating her tone of voice, words like “cold” and “uncontrolled” frequently recur.

Lou Salome describes Hedda, “She is an image of boundless demands for freedom and the decisive rejection of every duty and responsibility, an image allied with a weakness that yields to everything perishable and allows itself to be captured by the most trifling” (129).

Hedda wants to live a carefree life devoid of familial bindings and responsibilities. She wants to be on top or as Ibsen puts it, “She really wants to live the whole life of a man” (McFarlane 122).

Hedda is fundamentally a child and a child of her particular past. She is the daughter of a General, with the narrow traditions of a military caste behind her; she has inherited the ethical nullity of her class. She is a girl who has been brought up by her father; the bringing-up seems to be in a manner more befitting a boy than a girl. The portrait of her father watches over her throughout the play, and she is still known as Hedda Gabler rather than Hedda Tesman. The bringing-up and the domineering attitude prevent her from behaving like an ordinary woman in the family and in society. The boredom in Hedda’s life and Tesman’s dedication towards his profession make her depressed.
As a desperate woman she starts her married life with Tesman. Having been brought up by the General, she develops a stony heart; it gets hardened when she is forced to live in an atmosphere of aloofness. Even her honeymoon trip becomes boring, as Tesman utilizes it for his research. Hedda believes she is of high breed and underestimates the members in the family of Tesman. She is blind to real affection, love and familial bindings. As the whole family exchanges love and affection, she spits fire on them.

When Aunt Tesman makes a visit to Tesman’s home, after the return of Tesman and Hedda from their honeymoon trip, she deliberately and cruelly mistakes Aunt Tesman’s new hat bought in her honour for the servant’s old one. Another incident is where Tesman is heard sending his love to Aunt Rena and thanking Miss Tesman for his slippers. Meanwhile Hedda walks up and down the room, raising her arms and clenching her fists as though in desperation. These are excellent illustrations of Ibsen’s power to reveal psychological tensions and pressures of the most intense kind through brilliant artistic manipulations of ‘trivial’ details.

Hedda feels an autumnal chill in her soul as she looks out at the yellow, withered leaves in her garden. She starts probing into Thea’s relationship with Lovborg, whose love she rejected once, making him a dissolute human being. Even in her schooldays, she had behaved rudely to Thea, and she gets frightened by Hedda. The conversation between Thea and Hedda shows her temperament and her behaviour:
HEDDA. Afraid of me?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, terribly. Because whenever we met on the stairs, you'd always pulled my hair.

HEDDA. Did I really?

MRS. ELVSTED. Yes, and once you said you would burn it off.

(*HG 711*).

The emptiness in her coupled with jealousy leads her on a dangerous path. Her expectations have been pacified by Tesman's indulgence in his research. As the General's daughter, Hedda is known for her style and sophistication. By doing so, she keeps up the General's reputation whereas to Tesman, she is a burden to his financial state.

Hedda is an outsider in every aspect, in her behaviour, manner, thought and way of living. Poor in showing her affection towards the family, she could manifest negativity to them and receives partial love and affection from the family members. She seems strangely resigned to her unhappy marriage because of her dissatisfaction with life. She feels depressed, and to fill the emptiness in her, she lures all men.

The boredom in Hedda haunts her and she expects more from her husband who is unable to satisfy her needs; she remains aloof all the time in the family and finds Brack the only companion who amuses her. She is fed up with her
honeymoon trip as she is devoid of company and she expresses her extreme anguish: “Yes, I must say I longed for some third person so many times on that trip. Oh – those endless tete-a-tetes in railway compartments –! ” (HG 726). The basic necessity for a human being is communication with a fellow being. She expects a lot from her husband as a newly wedded wife but it is denied to her. Instead of a husband, she needs at least a third person to share her feelings.

At this point, it is perfectly clear that Hedda finds her marriage miserable and she is solely responsible for her misery. She willingly marries Tesman and becomes pregnant. As General Gabler’s daughter, she has had other options for marriage, and yet there is the strange sense that she forecasts her own doom. She senses in her an alien nature that cannot exist in harmony with the world. She must cause chaos or she must die. Brack talks about her new responsibilities but she denies them. Brack encourages her: “Don’t you think you’ve a talent for what almost every woman finds the most meaningful—” (HG 730). Brack means Hedda could think about giving birth to a child and bringing up the child could help her to spend time meaningfully. But she answers, “Boring myself to death” (HG 730).

When Brack implies that children might help to alleviate Hedda’s boredom and renew her, she refuses to acknowledge that she is pregnant, or to even entertain the idea of having children. The notion of giving birth to children is abhorrent and the idea of raising children gives her a sense of boredom. The idea of ending life at any moment keeps her boredom at bay.
Stein Haugom Olsen opines, “Hedda rebuffs the Tesmanesque ethos (consideration, sympathy, love, hearty, familiar) shows contempt for Aunt Julie (by making offensive remarks about her hat), and rejects those values which manifest themselves in Aunt Julie’s reception of her. Her manner is cold and offensive” (596). This shows her rude behaviour with the aunt especially owing to the misidentity of her hat. Through trivial things, she hurts the family members of Tesman.

Hedda has not heard of Tesmanesque qualities like pity, love, kindness, consideration etc. She has never been taught emotional intelligence. Every time Tesman leaves the room, isolating Hedda with another man, who has had an unhealthy sort of relationship with Hedda in the past, she is in a strangely untenable position. She has an absent husband and two other men, Brack and Lovborg woo her. Perhaps there is a way of working out these conflicts, but Hedda has two character “flaws” that make her feel trapped. She is paralyzed by her fear of scandal, and is simultaneously incapacitated by her fear of getting too close to anybody. Thus, the idea of a baby, an emotional relationship with Lovborg, (whom she nearly killed when he got too close to her) or a sexual relationship with Brack is all impossible to her. Being bored by life she is unable to take steps to engage with life deeply enough to become excited by it.

Like a child, to avoid boredom, Hedda is playing dangerous games with men. She induces Lovborg to relapse into drinking after two years of sobriety, just
because Lovborg is advised by Thea not to drink. She is of the opinion that she has to control and overpower everyone, especially men around her. She may be suppressed by her father but she retaliates in every possible way. It is clear when she says to Lovborg: “Yes, there is. For once in my life, I want to have power over a human being” (HG 745).

But it is impossible for Hedda to overpower Lovborg, as he is in the clutches of Thea with the commitment of publishing his manuscript, in which Thea’s role is remarkable. This is indigestible to Hedda who wants to remove Lovborg from her mind. Actually his ‘manuscript’ is the ‘child’ to Thea and Lovborg, but their child is burnt by Hedda. Ibsen offers a great deal of insight into the motivations behind Hedda’s actions. He opines: “Hedda’s desperation is a conviction that life must offer so many possibilities of happiness, but that she can’t catch sight of them. It is the want of a goal in life that torments her” (McFarlane 130).

Hedda is aimless and she has no goals to fulfil. She lives for the rush of a moment, which determines the fate of others. This gives her the fleeting sense of purpose and control that makes her feel alive. Ultimately, though the boredom keeps frequently repeating, she eventually has no control over her own fate. As a lady who has crossed her teen age, she has to marry a man, nevertheless, she could not accept the thought that her child would dictate her future; she is ultimately at the mercy of the man who covets her:
She possesses an inclination toward the wildly adventurous, but since she lacks a zest for life, she withdraws into a shell and hides carefully all impulses that could damage her reputation. She lets her gaze wander into the open world, with a peeking and lusting curiosity, but will only allow her thoughts, enlightened as she is, to play with forbidden fruit.

(Lou Salome 133)

She plays with Lovborg by giving a pistol to him. She comes to know from Brack that Lovborg committed suicide with Hedda’s pistol. She is shocked to apprehend that she has to fall again into the trap of Brack. At last Hedda seeks help from her husband by speaking that she had burnt Lovborg’s manuscript in order to make Tesman popular because Lovborg is a rival to Tesman’s professional popularity. She believes her husband would safeguard her but he too falls in the company of Thea who helps him in resurrecting Lovborg’s manuscript. Whatever she planned turns erroneous and she becomes the victim of her own conspiracy.

James observes of Hedda’s character: “Complicated, strange, irreconcilable infernal; she is ‘infinitely perverse’, and blame indeed, a perfectly ill regulated person” (Ibsen – A Dissenting View 132). Tesman is ready to renovate Lovborg’s manuscript with the help of Thea’s personal notes. Hedda could not endure the
words of Tesman. She says, “I can hear everything you say, Tesman, but what will
I do evenings over here?” Tesman [leafing through the notes] replies: “Oh, I’m
sure judge Brack will be good enough to stop by and see you” (HG 777).

Hedda is cornered by Brack and her free will is curtailed by him. She is
completely alienated from the family and falls into the hands of a third person,
Brack, who intends to exploit her in the name of a “triangular relationship”. It is
pathetic to find that Hedda suffers from alienation from the beginning till the end.
She is completely devoid of human affection and even in her death, there is no one
to regret for her. Lou Salome places on record Hedda’s emotions:

    Hedda slowly walks into the dark back room, where her piano
    stands and on which rests her pistol case. Through the
    opening of the drapes, a friendly, peaceful picture around her
    lamp-lit work table presents itself, and she feels herself to be
    an outcast standing alone in the dark. (144)

Throughout the play, the seriousness of the things she does is in some
measure offset by the contradictory nature of her various responses. She reacts
rather like an angry child to the various problems confronting her. Finally, even
her suicide is a childish gesture in which she thumbs her defiance at a world she
neither understands nor likes. In contrast to Ghosts, where characters probe each
other and their past in order to bare real motives, Hedda Gabler moves swiftly forward
in time in a linear manner and with only the briefest glimpses into the past.
The past intervenes in the life of Halvard Solness and it becomes the dangerous seduction in *The Master Builder*. Halvard Solness is, in today’s language, a building contractor, self-made and successful, who designs houses with the help of a small staff who supplies the architectural qualifications which he himself lacks. The three men, Knut Brovik, an ex-architect, now old and ill, in whose office the pushing Solness once worked, Brovik’s son Ragnar, a talented draughtsman who would like to set up on his own account and Ragnar’s fiancée Kaja, a delicate girl who works as a book-keeper are exploited by Solness. He dominates these necessary backroom personnel by his force of personality, refusing to recognize Ragnar’s ability or to allow him to take commissions for fear that he should leave, and complacently encouraging Kaja’s timid adoration of himself.

Solness is highly depressed having lost his two children in the aftermath of the fire accident. To wipe away this sadness, he indulges in a temperamental disposition to pet young girls without becoming seriously involved with them. His half-conscious exploitation of others extends in a subtler form to his wife Aline, an anxiety-ridden woman and a semi-invalid (such as Beata became) who is oppressed by his vitality and has taken refuge in a rigid and cheerless conception of ‘duty’. In the past, her own family home, in which they both lived, was burnt down in a fire, enabling Solness, as though providentially, to divide the site into building-lots and launch himself as a master builder. As another consequence of
the fire, their twin infant sons died not due to the disaster but because of Aline's breast-feeding especially after the shock which made her incapable of doing so. They have had no more children.

For all his apparent confidence, Solness has an obsessive fear of being overtaken and eclipsed by the younger generation. This fear triggers Solness to deny Ragnar's talent and keep Ragnar and Kaja as slaves to him. If these two break away, others would come storming in too. The middle-aged Master Builder would be crowded out of the picture.

Just when he is confessing his misgivings to the family doctor, a young woman appears out of the blue. She is Hilda Wangel, the daughter of the doctor of the mountain village of Lysanger where Solness once built a church. He has no recollection of her, but she seems to know him well. She quickly brings the past back into focus.

She recalls that when the church at Lysanger was finished, Solness honoured an old custom by going up the ladder and hanging a wreath on the weathercock which topped the spire. The inhabitants massed below gazed up and cheered, among them a group of schoolgirls in their white dresses, all carrying flags to mark the occasion. After a celebration, Solness is invited to Dr. Wangel's house for dinner. There, Hilda reminds him, he was alone with her for a few minutes. He caught hold of the twelve-year-old girl and kissed her 'many, many times'. He called her his princess and said (playfully as he now half-protests) that
in ten years he would come and fetch her and give her a kingdom. The ten years are now up. In hiking clothes, carrying only a knapsack, and with no money in her pocket, Hilda Wangel has left home and come to hold him to his promise.

Hilda’s arrival coincides with a crisis in Solness’s life. He is torn between his professional and personal lives. Professionally, he is in morbid fear of the ascendant younger generation and in personal life, he is guilty of ruining his wife’s happiness. He feels instinctively that she is already ‘dead’, in that she is entirely obsessed by the past, and he resents this drag on his own now questionable vitality. Believing that she was originally broken by the death of their children after the fire, he is bound to her tightly by his uneasy conscience, although in fact he had done nothing to cause the fire. By the end he has come to believe that he has special powers to command luck. So the fire came because he willed it, giving him his chance as a builder, but at the same time destroying the children and Aline’s old home.

The couple lives together in a hopeless atmosphere of mutual resentment, suspicion, guilt and solicitousness. Each knows or suspects that the other is going mad, or rather suspects that the other believes that he is going mad. As an attempt at renewal, Solness has built a brave new house with a tower across the road, into which they would shortly move. It is the artist’s offering of his skill and labour to an utterly uninterested partner. They have really reached an impasse, beautifully
rendered by Ibsen, with psychological realism hardly approached by any earlier European dramatist. It is a development beyond the relationship of Rosmer and Beata in *Rosmersholm*.

Ibsen delineates his characters in the light of Psychological realism and it focuses on interior landscapes of a human psyche. It also records the inward experience of human beings instead of recording daily events as a story line, the flash back narrative records backwards and forwards in time, focusing on a character’s mind and memory. So memory serves as a tool to extract the happenings in the mind. Hilda skillfully grills Mrs. Solness’s mind by employing her to get involved in her memory. She leads her to talk of her two dead children and makes the spine-chilling discovery that it is not their disappearance which has created the void in her life, but the loss of her family possessions and, most of all, of the ‘nine beautiful dolls’ which she had ‘gone on living with’ even after her marriage. One need not look very far to see that these objects symbolize her childhood and the independent personality which she possessed before she was dominated by her husband. Hilda receives the revelation with a combination of horror and pity. She is confident that she could capture the Master Builder, but at first she decides to go away and leave him to his wife.

Through the dialogic mode, the psychological realism is effectively engineered here. Hilda and Mrs. Solness engage in dialogues and gradually she brings out Mrs. Solness’s hidden sadness. Her sanguine youthfulness, her sense of
life and 'joy', her 'idealism' and her animal love of 'excitement' reassert themselves and she decides to stay with Solness and helps him build their 'castle in the air'. Solness, at this juncture in his life, is helpless before her. The promise of her love and her contagious energy drive him on to attempt 'the impossible', represented in this case by the challenge of climbing the scaffolding of the new house and hanging the traditional wreath on top of the tower.

Solness is afraid of heights. What he did at the church at Lysanger was done in a rare moment of exaltation, and he was ten years younger then. But the image of him standing 'free and high up' has remained with Hilda and she wants to see it again before she gives herself to him. He goes up to the incredulous horror of his wife who knows his weakness. From the top he waves his hat to the crowd below. Hilda snatches up a white shawl which is Mrs.Solness's and waves it frantically back crying: "Hurrah for the Master Builder!" (MB 860). Other spectators take up the cry and wave handkerchiefs. Solness, seeing them, loses his balance and plunges down to his death.

Solness feels jealous of youngsters who try to usurp his position as a master builder in the city. A distinguished architect at the peak of his career creates the "helpers and servers" (the supernatural guardian spirits) as the agents responsible for his rise in the world. He fears the threat of youth. His life and marriage seem to him empty and pointless; the only way he can survive is by ruthlessly exploiting the young people who work for him. He keeps himself aloof from normal life with
Aline and enjoys the company of Kaja Fosli, his book-keeper in his work room.
He confesses that by telepathic means he influences Kaja and she also develops an infatuation for Solness, even after her engagement to Ragnar. Solness is suspected of mental illness by his wife who resents his long train of female admirers. She is always depressed owing to the loss of her twin sons and neglects the duty of wife to Solness. Solness lacks faith in himself and he is apprehensive that he would be outwitted by the young. He is scared of the change in him and in the world. He expresses his fear to Dr. Herdal:

It racks me, this year – it racks me, morning and night. Because some day things have to change, you’ll see. The change is coming. I can sense it. And I feel that it’s coming closer. Someone or other will set up the cry: Step back for me! And all the others will storm in after, shaking their fists and shouting: Make room – make room – make room! Yes, Doctor, you better look out. Some day youth will come here, knocking at the door –. (MB 799)

Personally and professionally he is depressed and turns out to be a pessimist. It drives him to lead a still-life without meaning. The arrival of Hilda adds charm to his life. She relates a strange story in which ten years ago to the day, following the dedication of a newly completed church, Solness, its builder,
kissed her so many times and promised her a kingdom of Orangia in a decade’s time. He vehemently denies this incident, but later on, he is persuaded by her. They start building castles in the air by indulging in romance and feel ecstatic.

Solness entirely alienates himself from the household activities, avoids talking to his wife, and indulges in a sexual tease with Kaja Fosli to forget his past. The loss of their twin boys in the fire accident makes her lament, “You can build as much as you ever want, Halvard, but for me you can never build up a real home again” (MB 816). Even if he becomes a master builder, he could not give her back the happiness as a husband.

Mrs. Solness strongly believes she has become “barren” after the loss of her children in the accident. Solness feels guilty because of the crack of the chimney which makes the wind furious and ends with the chimney catching fire. But he confesses that the fire helped him grow in his business by building homes for families, but it sickens Aline’s soul. He carries the burden throughout, it disgusts to him to face Aline and to share his real intense feelings with her. Added to this, Hilda also comes with the commitment that she should make Solness build her kingdom which he once swore to a young girl. Theoharis Constantine Theoharis opines:

Rather than joyfully willing his deliverance from the guilty view that murder gave birth to and compromised his greatness, Solness sacrifices that view to avoid a second kind
of murder, a transposed spiritual destruction of Hilda’s transcendent longing for his magnanimous self-creation. (193)

Already he has destroyed the hopes of his wife, so he supports the idea of Hilda of creating him a master builder. But in extreme fantasy he forgets his shortcomings in being a master builder and at the same time he does not want to commit one more murder by shattering Hilda’s hopes.

He dislikes committing sin by rejecting Ragnar; he sanctions his wish by signing away the pictures. Now he is committed to the task of self-creation. Solness finds Hilda to be the soul mate for making his dream come true. As in Rosmersholm, Rosmer finds Rebecca. The depression in him drains his energy and pulls him down. Solness says, “And yet there’s this sense of some enormous guilt hanging over me, crushing me down” (MB 818).

Solness suffers from the manic depression. Manic depression in psychology means that a person’s mood swings high and low. He is very active and cheerful, but to Aline, he is entirely the opposite. The dejection in him restricts space for the youth to grow and establish. He suppresses them and strongly believes that he would be outwitted by the young, like the way he outwitted Brovik.

Solness is very fragile at heart with lack of exposure to view the reality of life and has never faced hard things in his lifetime. He has lost his twin boys in the
aftermath of the fire, finds himself as a cause for it and it drives him to extreme 
depression. Hilda rightly points out his weak mind and demeanor: “I mean your 
conscience is very fragile. Over-refined, sort of. It is n’t made to struggle with 
things – to pickup what’s heavy and bear it. I could wish that your conscience was 
– well, quite robust” (MB 831). Hilda wishes him to emerge from the critical 
situation as an empowered man. But his heart is too tender to encounter 
misfortunes in his life.

Solness lacks a robust conscience. He is fearsome, yields his life to illusion 
and thereafter meets death. As an outsider, he is very selfish in his attitude and 
approach and indulges in an illusory life with Hilda. Solness lacks self-realization. 

Allmers in Little Eyolf is like Solness. Barry Jacobs remarks:

Allmers is pompous, self-centered and neurotic. He pretends 
that after a great struggle with his conscience he has 
“renounced” his cherished project, his great book on human 
responsibility, in order to devote himself wholly to his new 
mission; he now intends to make Eyolf into the sort of man 
who can first transcend his handicap. (610)

Like Hjalmar, he too starts with a mission of writing a book on responsibility but later 
on his ambition gets diluted and he takes up new responsibility of patterning his son.
Actually, Alfred Allmers leads a life of a gentleman scholar, having married a beautiful and wealthy landowner, Rita, for the sake of her ‘gold and green forests’. Allmers returns after his walking tour in the mountain, Rita is very passionate towards Allmers whereas his interest lies only in the crippled child Eyolf. His mission in life is to write ‘a book on responsibility’ and for this mission he takes up a journey towards the mountains, but he does not even make any effort to complete it. He justifies himself that at present his ambition is to mould his son. He affirms: “I want to see if I can kindle all the rich possibilities dawning in that child’s mind. All the tentative nobility in him, I want to help to grow – and blossom and bear fruit” (LE 882). As a father he expresses his wish to bring him up as a noble and responsible man but he could not materialize this want.

Allmers marries Rita for her riches and also to give his half-sister Asta all comforts. Rita is possessive to the extent of considering little Eyolf a hurdle between her husband and herself. Allmers finds it difficult to balance his wife and his son. He evades his responsibility as a husband to Rita, like Rosmer in Rosmersholm. Whatever affection he might once have felt for his wife has long since faded. His emotional life is now dominated by incestuous fantasies of his half-sister Asta. Jacobs compares Allmers with Rosmer: “He is impotent; it is much more likely that – like Rosmer – he suffers from excessive prudery or from a neurosis that makes it impossible for him to reconcile love and sexuality”(610). Rosmer and Allmers could not distinguish between love and sexuality. They treat
Rebecca and Hilda respectively as their possessions for exchanging sexuality rather than love. They are unsuccessful in winning their hearts as affectionate and ideal companions.

Unwilling or unable to acknowledge the reality of what he feels, Alfred leads a life of emotional self-deception. Leading an unworthy life, Allmers lives as an outsider. Most of the times he indulges in romantic fantasy of Asta and wants to keep her beside him. At the same time, he ignores the responsibilities as a husband, making Rita’s feeling numb towards him. He proves to be an unworthy person for Rita’s passion.

Here it is apt to document Gomez’s words to elicit the trait of an outsider: “The outsider as a deviant figure embroiled in an incestuous situation is seen in almost all the ages, and even extends back to the remote past of Greek tragedy” (*Alienated Figure* 6).

Allmers can also be viewed as an outsider who tries to involve himself in an incestuous situation. Life has no meaning after the death of his son. He is desperate and his life turns out to be like a ship drifting without a rudder. Allmers knows nothing of moral standards and finds happiness in the imagination of his intimate relationship with Asta. By doing so, he remains an outsider to the family as well as to himself. He forgets even his son in the presence of Asta, and Eyolf slips out of his mind. He confesses: “No, he wasn’t. He had slipped out of my mind. Out of my thoughts. I lost sight of him a moment while we sat talking together. Totally forgot him that whole time” (*LE* 900). He places Asta in the place of little Eyolf and his mind is completely dominated by sensuality.
Asta reminds him of his responsibility as a husband to Rita. He immediately denies that relationship and admits that Asta’s relationship gives him happiness and satisfaction. Though a brother can be allowed to show his affection and love for a sister, in Allmer’s case it kindles a doubt, even in the mind of Rita. He inclines to accept only Asta’s love and is unable to accept Rita’s. He admits, “Ever since you were a little child, (After a short pause) And then, too, I always felt I had too many wrongs to set right” (LE 902).

Allmers is so self-centered that he forgets his responsibility as a father to Eyolf by indulging in the process of writing a book on responsibility. Unable to perform that task, he declares he is going to take care of his son completely and make him a happy human being. But after the demise of Eyolf, he replaces Eyolf with Asta, calling her ‘Big Eyolf’. Solness in The Master Builder forgets his loss of twin boys by indulging in the sexual tease with Kaja and later on with Hilda. Similar to this, Allmers spends most of his time with Asta, forgetting his son’s loss. Rita has undergone a sea change in her perception of life. Once, she is passionate like Rebecca in Rosmersholm. But her passion melts down into real love.

Both Allmers and Rita want to escape from the guilt of having been irresponsible towards Eyolf. They blame each other. Allmers accuses Rita that she only lured him to her bed when he was watching over the child. Allmers is very selfish and accuses Rita for Eyolf’s lameness. Eventually Rita wants to renovate her deeds for Eyolf but Allmers is not ready for it. Instead he woos his half-sister
Asta. He admits that he is very selfish and he marries Rita only for her wealth, not out of love and passion. Allmers develops fear instead of affection. Marriage takes place between them to make Asta comfortable and secure. Rita comes to know about Allmers from his confession that he married her only for wealth. Anyway she does not want to give him up but Allmers, fed up with Rita, and wants to disengage himself from the familial bindings and responsibilities and to be attached with Asta always. Allmers even goes to the extent of asking Asta to come and live with him just as they were brother and sister once.

At this juncture, he discloses the secret that Asta is not his half-sister. Still Allmers wants to live with her, but driven by the moral standard, Asta denies his wish and leaves the house with Borjehm. Allmers is very possessive towards Asta, never cares about her life and wants to involve her with his life. Asta is very conscious of this; she escapes from this embarrassing situation to join hands with Borjehm. Allmers is left alone and he even thinks of breaking his marriage with Rita. He confesses to Asta: “Yes, Rita and I can’t continue living together” (LE 915). He refuses to live with Rita but he is ready to live with his half-sister Asta. He deliberately displays his discontent to Rita and he expresses his passion towards Asta.

Till the end, Allmers does not want to change his opinion. His life seems empty. Rita emerges as a new woman who wants to fill her heart with something valuable, i.e., love. At last Allmers is helpless and is forced to accept the change that took place in the mind of Rita. The self-centered, ruthless Allmers is
transformed into a human being who is ready to live for others. He wishes to dedicate his lifetime to his goal and mission of work on human responsibility. Rebecca instils the nobility of human responsibility of ennobling others in Rosmer. In the same way, Allmers accepts the initiative of Rita and wants to live a meaningful life. A change takes place in him and with happiness, he accepts the village children as his own children.

The image of the outsider in each age may reflect society’s efforts to come to terms with the realities of that age. Both drama and philosophy are explorations of the predominant concerns of the age. The outsider usually appears when the existing value systems are threatened or new values are in the forge. The outsider figure in drama may thus be seen as an indicator of social or intellectual crisis in an age of upheaval. The outsider reflects the spirit of the age and embodies its problems, aspirations and fears. Ibsen’s protagonists, especially in the selected plays, are seen as individuals who suffer self-alienation rather than social alienation. Ibsen’s Rosmersholm, Hedda Gabler, The Master Builder and Little Eyolf are “the dramas … of inward rather than outward event” (Gomez 96). Besides, the protagonists being estranged from society and religion, they also feel towards the end alienated from existence itself.

The outsiders assume roles like the liberators, the rebels and the reformers but in all these roles they find dissatisfaction. The disappointment leads to alienation. In addition to this, the guilt-ridden past dominates and ruins their
course of action. They are identified as outsiders and they feel like outcasts among their fellow beings. They withdraw from the present reality and give themselves up to illusions. The illusion forces them to experience truth but it destroys them. By this they attain self-fulfilment.

Due to their alienation, the protagonists indulge in romantic illusion and their imagination provides an illusive life to them. The illusion soothes them and they do not wish to come out from the entanglement. They wish to be in the same state of mind but reality forces them to transform and transcend them to a different plane.