CHAPTER - III

SHARON POLLOCK : WOMEN IN FAMILY AND
FEMALE EMPOWERMENT

I certainly don't understand how a woman with any sense of justice can not be a feminist, but I object to those people who think that 'feminist playwright' means that there is a hidden ideology by which aesthetic choices are being governed.

Sharon Pollock

In the burst of theatrical activity in Canada during the 1970's one finds a notably high number of dramas written by women on the Canadian stage. The focus on 'feminist dramas' brings to light the innovative theatrical work by women playwrights during this period. The plays are self-consciously 'Canadian' preoccupied with issues of women's identity and nationalism. A number of plays were written by women and a good number of women directors, were given an opportunity to work on the Canadian stage. The women playwrights try to keep their self-critical faculty active, their drive in high gear, their vision fresh and their voice distinctive to confront the patriarchal power structure. Rewriting historical subject from a woman's point of view and featuring strong central women characters
is one strategy of the feminist movement (Ex.) Bolt's Red Emma, Hollingsworth's Ever Loving and Pollock's Blood Relations. The protagonists in these plays by operating within the confines of a society regulated by a male system of values, struggle against the stereotype of feminity which so constricts them. The protagonists in their plays struggle against the familial, social or political order that exists in the Canadian society of which they are a part.

When women's experiences and their offstage reality are kept in the dark, the men's experiences and onstage action are illuminated leading the women dramatists to move our focus of attention to the challenges faced by women in the theatrical scene. The women playwrights have chosen to write on the intolerance faced by immigrant groups, the sufferings brought by European immigrants, religious and ethnic conflicts, economic injustices and the patriarchal power structure which restricts women. Sharon Pollock who emerged in 1970's as a prominent playwright worked as a playwright, actor, director, dramaturge, teacher and theatre administrator. She has been committed to probe preconceptions and assumptions, both political and personal in her work. Pollock is a didactic playwright whose characters are mouthpieces for expressing the familial, political and social criticism and her women protagonists strive for empowerment.
John Palmer in one of his articles commented that Canada could not produce a playwright of Ibsen’s stature. Michelene Wandor observes Pollock’s plays help, “to change the dominant assumptions about plays having to be either situated in the public arena or the privacy of interpersonal emotions.” (ix) Pollock’s commitment to the discipline, her experimentation and expansion of the boundaries of her dramatic universe and her practice of working in more than one performance medium impressed the audience to regard her as Canada’s answer to Ibsen. Malcolm page comments about Pollock’s dramaturgical challenges, as “restless determination to avoid obvious approaches and search for angles which are effective and unusual”. (100).

Mary Sharon Pollock was born on 19 April 1936 in Fredericton, New Brunswick. She was the eldest child of Dr. Everett Chalmers, a respected physician. Cynthia Zimmerman writes about her father, “Mary Sharon Chalmers is the eldest child of Dr. Everett Chalmers, an esteemed physician and a long – term Tory MLA in the New Brunswick legislature”. (61). After her mother’s death, she dropped out at the end of her first year of university to marry Ross Pollock – a Toronto insurance broker. The failure of her marriage made her to move to Fredericton with her five children. The quest for her job compelled her to involve herself with professional theatre. In continuation of her
work, she acted for new Beaverbrook, later called as Theatre New Brunswick. She met actor Michael Ball and moved to Calgary together and joined a group of actors called 'Prairie Players'. The Prairie players toured Alberta, British Columbia and other places. Pollock received Dominion Drama festival actress award and Ball won the best actor award. They continued their peripatetic life in Calgary.

The encouragement and support received from Ball tickled Pollock's creative instinct and she wrote plays for the radio that led to her writing for the stage. In 1971 she wrote A Compulsory Option, her first stage play that won an Alberta culture playwriting competition was produced by Vancouver’s new play centre. To enlighten theatre in-education programme, the Vancouver’s play House Holiday produced Sharon Pollock’s many radio, television scripts for CBC and nine plays for children. She proved her masterly efficiency with related professional activities, as instructor, administrator and director. Sharon Pollock returned to Prairies in 1976 and worked as playwriting instructor for the University of Alberta. In 1977, she spent several summers as the head of the Playwrights colony at the Banff school of Fine Arts. She was playwright – in – residence with Alberta Theatre projects (1977-1979) and ran writing workshops, served as artist – in – residence at the National Arts Centre (1980-1982), member of the
Canada Council Advisory Arts Panel (1978-1981) Associate Artistic Director (1983), Artistic Director of Theatre Calgary (1984) Associate Director at Manitoba Theatre Centre (1988), Artistic Director with Theatre New Brunswick (1988-1990) and here, she abandoned her desire to head a major theatre company as the board of directors insisted on traditional views. Then she was appointed as Associate Director of the 1990 Stratford Festival. Pollock talks about her commitment to her work, in the following way "You have to be passionately connected to something". (38).

Sharon Pollock proved her talents as a versatile actress in the eighties. She acted in plays *End Game*, *The Seagull* and *House of Blue Leaves*. She continued her performance in her own plays as Miss Lizzie in *Blood Relations*, Eme in *Getting It Straight* and Catherine in *Doc*. She expressed her interest in taking up various challenging roles and she also directed *Hedda Gabbler* for the stage.

Sharon Pollock directed many classics and contemporary works both foreign and Canadian plays. Pollock directed several productions of her own plays *Doc* and ended her tenure with a production of Wendy Lill’s *Memories of You*. The performance of John Murrell’s *A Great Noise A Great Light* enlightened her and changed her career. She was passionately connected to her work.
throughout her life. Sharon Pollock's plays for children were well sought after by children's theatre as there was a need for it by the young audiences. She considered it a wonderful place to learn the craft and to confront the challenge of minimal resources. Young People's Theatre for Bolt in Toronto, Playhouse Holiday for Pollock in Vancouver gave them some degree of security and active encouragement which helped them to achieve tangible goals. The connection to the theatrical group influenced both the playwrights and led them to collective creation. Pollock was involved with one collective creation Tracing: The Fraser Story. Like several of her Canadian contemporaries, Sharon Pollock wrote documentary dramas. The researched subject matter was combined with informational dramatic techniques to handle the facts of a particular issue. For Pollock the challenge was to forge documentation into a dramatic shape.

Pollock's various experiments with presentational stage narration are the measure of her progress in handling documentation as persuasive on stage information. Her specific use of female characterization reflects her increasing efforts to 'personalize' the issues representationally. Pollock and Bolt started writing plays with subjects taken from Canadian history. When alternative theatre in
Canada became popular, many new plays were written on historical subjects. They tried to re-discover and re-present Canada's history for the contemporary public. Like Bolt, Pollock created, modified and augmented in retelling the Canadian history. According to Pollock, they "personalize (s) events that were just facts before". (quoted in Wallace and Zimmerman 122). During the early stages of her dramatic career she combined historical and political interests in her plays. Her stage work can be divided along a line between history plays like _Walsh_, _The Komagata Maru Incident_, _One Tiger to a Hill_ and more personal family plays beginning with _Blood Relations_ including _Generations_, _Whiskey Six Cadenza_ and _Doc_. Pollock comments about the performance of women playwrights "There was a need for our work". (36).

Pollock gained attention in Canada by bringing out her full - length play, _Walsh_ at theatre Calgary. It was a historical play that explored the relationship between the North West mounted police officer of the title and Sitting Bull Sioux on the Canadian Prairies in 1870's. She has targeted the myth of the glorious Mounties and accused the Canadian Government of both servile toadying to the Americans and the appalling behaviour shown towards native people. The play _And out Goes You_ - depicts the defeat of ordinary working
class people by vested capitalist's interests. Her next play, The Komagata Maru Incident based on a little known historical event, traces the official racism against Asians in 1914 when a boat-load of Sikh immigrants are refused landing in Vancouver Harbour. One Tiger To A Hill, 1980 indicts the modern prison system through its dramatization of a hostage taking incident, based on events at New Westminster Penitentiary in 1975. Then during the later stage of her dramatic career she began to focus on the issues of private lives which were related to the repressive power structures operating within the family.

Rudakoff and Much comment, "From the start, Pollock, shows herself to be a writer strongly committed to social comment and as the success of her plays demonstrates, society is able to accept her way of saying the world should be different". (211). The play Generations deals with the attitudes of a family of three generations of farmers towards the land. The play brings to light the conflict between traditional and contemporary values between urban and rural living. Whiskey Six Cadenza traces the legal and moral issues of prohibition and temperance as well as the working conditions of the miners of Blairmore which formed an integral part of the play's personal and family related conflicts and their sadly destructive consequences. The
play Doc deals with the life of Katherine, the feisty and unconventional daughter fighting her autocratic father and unsupported by her mother who ultimately gives in to his patriarchal authority. The play traces how the daughter succeeds in getting out of patriarchal structure leading to her assertion of female identity. Zimmerman observes,

*Her political bias is overtly present in the early plays and the political positions dramatized tend to be polarized. However, by introducing multiple viewpoints even in the early works, she suggests alternative ways of understanding the politics of an event. And in all of her plays Pollock manipulates the ‘frame structure’ point of view, and the way of telling* (69).

Sharon Pollock was at the height of her dramatic career in the early seventies, “the halcyon days of Canadian theatre”, when Carol Bolt, Margaret Hollingsworth, Erika Ritter, Rick Salutin, David French, George Walker and many others were also mounting their first works. Sharon Pollock likes to be regarded as a feminist playwright. Her artistic perceptions and choices are dictated by her femaleness. Keyssar observes “the recognition scene has been central to drama, but feminist drama presents metamorphosis in place of self – discovery”. (16). Her plays deal with an individual who is directed to or compelled to follow a course of action, to examine the morality and the authority
(family, society, government) is removed emotionally or geographically from the protagonist. In a conference in Toronto on women’s issues in the theatre in 1985, Rina Fraticelli, cited playwright Sharon Pollock as representing ‘the distinct female view point”. Fraticelli’s appropriation of Pollock as a feminist playwright might bear closer examination. Her plays from Blood Relations onwards show her increasing attention in dealing with women’s issues. Pollock’s plays of the 1980’s attracts, feminists and these plays are examined in relation to her whole growth as a playwright, a growth that can indeed be explored through her approach to female characterization and feminist themes.

Her later plays deal with serious questioning of the dominant social structure and a concern for gender roles. Sharon Pollock makes her society and setting the foreground to bring out social and political issues. She can also be regarded as ‘social playwright, since she has written plays focusing on social issues like social discrimination, female empowerment, sexual abuse and racism witnessed in Canada during 80’s. Though one sees a close connection between private and public life in Sharon Pollock’s career, many of her plays are all full of social comment. (Ex.) The Komagata Maru Incident (racism), and Whiskey Six Cadenza (sexual abuse). In the
later plays, historical and political issues have not been given up by the playwright but rather they have moved to the background. She in her plays portrays how the conventional social pattern does not give breathing space for self-expression. She believed that theatre can be an instrument of social reform. Sharon Pollock is in the process of a further move towards the exploration of the personal intricacies of social and familial responsibility as seen in the later plays. Pollock’s women’s stories are refracted through multiple personas enacting different stages of their lives.

A careful study of the oeuvre of Pollock’s plays would reveal that there is a notable shift of emphasis in her later works Blood Relations, Whiskey Six Cadenza, and Doc, in that the playwright explores the private life, in particular, the politics of family. In these plays there is not only a shift in emphasis from public to private life but also an increasing importance to women characters by portraying how patriarchal power structure affects women in family. Pollock depicts how women could not enjoy freedom of choice in the oppressive conventions of their social class. These plays deal with the strength of women who realize their status in the family and struggle to seize power and strike out freedom after a lifetime of powerlessness.

Pollock considered theatre as an accessible medium through which she
merged political and personal issues that gets explored in her dramatic works. This chapter examines three plays of Sharon Pollock *Blood Relations, Whiskey Six Cadenza* and *Doc* to bring out oppression of women in a male-dominated society in the plays. The women protagonists realize that the authoritarian regulations destroy freedom of choice and self responsibility. Sharon Pollock in her plays shows how women are trapped by oppressive social conventions and how they try to rebel against their restrictive social practices that leads to their empowerment.

*Blood Relations* was first produced in 1980 at Theatre Three in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. The previous version of the play was produced as *My Name Is Lisbeth* in 1976 at Douglas College with Pollock herself playing the role of Lizzie Borden. Sharon Pollock often extensively revises her plays, even after the first couple of productions. After revision, she renamed the play as *Blood Relations* and staged it as a new work in 1980. It had six different Canadian Productions shortly after its premiere and has had productions in England, the United States and Australia. *Blood Relations* were the first full length play produced by her. A published version of it, released in 1981, won her the Governor General’s award, the first time such an award was made for a piece of dramatic literature. This play signalled a shift in
Pollock’s drama towards the individual seen in family and social relationship.

**Blood Relations** is based on historical fact- the 1892 double murder of Lizzie Borden’s father and stepmother, a crime for which Lizzie herself was charged. The crime shocked the Massachusetts community of Fall River as well as the whole nation. Many perceived Lizzie as an early feminist who did not shy from acting, and her actions were based on self-preservation, an attempt to escape from an abusive family situation. Gilbert observes, “Pollock’s work appears to be more involved with studies of oppression in general and political processes in particular than …… in specific struggles of women”. (643) The playing areas include (a) within the Borden house - the dining room from which there is an exit to the kitchen; the parlour, a flight of stairs leading to the second floor and (b) in the Borden yard, the walk outside the house; and the area in which the birds are kept.

The play opens in late fall 1902, in Fall River. The household has six members. Lizzie proclaims that she hates her stepmother, and her father who is sixty-four, is rigid in thinking about women and ownership. Emma, Lizzie’s older sister is meek and non-confrontational. The maid is young, lively, irreverent and encouraged in her irreverence by Lizzie. Harry is Lizzie’s step uncle and the
catalyst for her decision to murder her parents. Pollock's first female protagonist like Carol Bolt is based on a famous figure from America in the 1890s. Carol Bolt presented Emma Goldman, as a charismatic personality in politics and Pollock finds the politics of Lizzie's circumstances more engaging than the complexities of her character. Both Bolt and Sharon Pollock had written earlier plays which reinterpret Canadian history and they continue to present historical material from a female perspective. Critic Diane Bessai calls Blood Relations, 'a turning point' in Pollock's work for several reasons, "Pollock's Lizzie Borden Play, with its entirely feminine point of view, is the one that the playwright concedes to be feminist". (46)

The protagonist Lizzie Borden in this play is an individualist, who has to make a terrible choice. Canadian plays of eighties deal with paternalistic, dictatorial structure of the family. Pollock observes,

*Within the family I see the same dominant and submissive positions that are acted against or reinforced as people try to preserve power or seize power. People try to choose and things block their choices basically I don’t see any difference in the outside (public) plays and the inside (private) plays. In essence they’re all about the same things. (quoted in Zimmerman 38).*
After the production of *Blood Relations* women characters are given greater importance and more autonomy in theatrical activities than they were before. Pollock in her later dramatic career moves her attention from the significant public event to the domestic one. She changes her settings from public to the private, personal and to the family. Bessai agrees that even though political and social issues remain central concerns, *"this work subsumes its issues entirely within personal character conflicts."* (Bessai 46). The 'game' is a development of a significant device of Pollock, to frame the action. The game is completely integrated into the action of the play. The play begins and ends in Lizzie Borden’s parlor ten years after the axe murder of her parents. Lizzie is entertaining her guest and lover, a professional Actress. S-R Gilbert considers that the play *"does not adequately explore issues of women in Victorian society"*. (645). The Actress complains about the children in the alley singing a little song about Lizzie killing her parents. Lizzie fails to respond to her question whether she committed the crime or not. It is at her request that the tale of Lizzie’s past is re-enacted, through a play within the play. The Actress says,

*I’ll tell you what I think. I think…. that you’re aware there is a certain fascination in the ambiguity. You always paint the background but*
leave the rest to my imagination. Did Lizzie Borden take an axe? If you
did not, I should be disappointed and if you didn’t I should be horrified.

(572)

With the game device, the two women act out a highly
sanitized version of what happened in the past, with the actress
playing Lizzie, and Lizzie playing the role of the Irish maid. Pollock
has labeled Lizzie’s re-enactment of the 1892 murder ten years prior as
the ‘dream thesis’. The play avoids realism and defies logical time
progression. The ambiguity of the play increases when Lizzie proposes
playing a game. In both the play’s present and in the flashback
sequences, Lizzie appears as a headstrong and slightly eccentric
woman. She has firm beliefs about living her life by her own rules.
Contrary to the expectations placed on women in the late 1880s, Lizzie
has no desire to marry and becomes a glorified domestic servant.
Lizzie is isolated and neglected by her father and stepmother. Harry,
her stepmother’s brother comments, “Miss Lizzie loves kitten and cats and
horses and dogs. What Miss. Lizzie doesn’t love is people”. (576)

Lizzie voices her concern that Harry is trying to connive
more money out of her father. Even though Lizzie is entitled to a third
of what her father owns, she leads her life without any real power to
use her father’s money. While contemporary women have many
choices in deciding their life course, women in the late 1800s were second-class citizens expected to fulfill specific, limited roles in society.

Within the social structure of the late-nineteenth century, Lizzie is at the mercy of female stereotypes. Lizzie who is accused of killing her parents with a hatchet, is a victim of the conservative era in which she lived. Lizzie feels that she is caged due to the oppressive atmosphere of the Borden home. She is guided by 'Bridget' into rejecting one way out after another until there is only one way left. In the early part of the game Miss.Lizzie inserts two confessions the first, that she is thirty-four and still have daydreams, the second that she feels, she is born defective without benefit of the magic formula for being 'a woman; Miss. Lizzie/Bridget; “I was thirty-four years old and I still day dreamed”(583). Lizzie's isolation from social norms is highlighted when her father attempts to arrange a marriage between her and a local widower. She rebels against the role of the dutiful daughter, alternately pleading with and ragging at her father. She is contemptuous of the expectations of the society regarding marriage when she has no wish to become a dutiful wife and mother.

Lizzie 'Papa...Papa, I Love you, I try to be what your want, really I do try...but... I don’t want to get married. I wouldn’t be a good mother, Mr. Borden. How do you know Lizzie; I know, it... I want out of all
this.. I hate this house, I hate.. I want out. Try to understand how I feel.. Why can’t I do something? Eh!. I mean ... I could.. I could.. go in to your office. I could... learn how to keep books?(584)

Lizzie’s flirtation with the married Catholic doctor is carried on to get rid of her boredom and to annoy her family, without running the risk of being pushed into marriage with him. Her hatred of dependence and her individuality is not accepted in the society. She feels isolated within her own family and ill suited to fulfill the role expected of her. While Lizzie appreciates the material comfort her family provides her, she craves for personal freedom and the encouragement to live her life as she feels. Yet her family and the community at large are too entrenched in subscribing to “normal” and “acceptable” female behaviour to ever allow such freedom. Pollock believes, “of course, it says something about women today. It says something about me today, things that I've felt”. (quoted in Wallace and Zimmerman 123) Lizzie’s family is often frustrated with her stubborn eccentricity and they are unsure of how to interact with her. Unable to find comfort and support within her own family, Lizzie feels victimized and alienated. Lizzie’s family could offer her more in the way of support. It is also evident that their subscription to social mores prevents them from endorsing the kind of life, Lizzie wishes to lead.
Lizzie is ultimately a victim of her times and her society. Pollock points out, "In a way I found myself using a historical situation for a metaphor for a much more contemporary women's theme". (quoted in Ashwell D2)

As a daughter of a wealthy respectable community member, Mr. Borden and Society expect her to function as a responsible and appropriate woman. Living apart from her family or working outside the home does not fit into the narrow constraints of society's expectations. Borden convinces her that women do not work in offices and the society do not approve of such ideas. Lizzie longs to possess property in her name even though she has no real property rights: "I've a legal right to one-third because I am his flesh and blood". (601)

Lizzie can own property and have her 'own' life only as connected to a male family member, whether father, husband or brother. Pollock points out, "what really interests me in the piece both when I wrote it and now even more so, is playing with the nature of the assuming of role and the "observed" and the "observer" which is really the audience and the actor and there's multiple levels of that". (quoted in Nothof 167).

Borden's brutality is so stark and dramatic when he cruelly attacks her way of life by destroying the pigeons of Lizzie Borden is consciously trying to wound her. The birds' death has a
profound effect on Lizzie and their capacity for flight was a symbol of
the freedom for which Lizzie yearned. The facts of Lizzie's life offer a
plausible motive for her to have committed the crime, but she remains
mute on the subject and the audience is left to ponder her actual
involvement. Richard Paul Knowles comments on the play, "for Pollock
the 'facts'... are less important than the imaginative truth, the past that we
must allow ourselves to imagine and therefore to bring into being as part of
our present".(240).

Though the monologues in the play suggests moments of
insanity, Pollock seems uninterested in a psychological study of Lizzie
Borden. Miss. Lizzie challenges the Actress to paint the background by
playing the role of Lizzie ten years back and come to her own
conclusions. We never lose sight of the 'real' characters during this
role playing. At strategic intervals, Lizzie steps out of her character
and acts as a good director. Lizzie fills the Actress's mind with images
to guide her performance at the subconscious level.

Miss. Lizzie / Bridget: "You dream of a carousel. You look into the
eyes (A sound from Lizzie, she is horrified and frightened. She covers
her eyes). There are none! none Just black holes in a white mask ......
(Pause). The eyes of your birds... are round .... and bright... a light
shines from inside …… they can see into your heart …… they’re pretty …… they love you …….. (603).

Through the haunting description of the dream of a mask like face with black holes for eyes and the description of the puppy starved by its mother, Lizzie makes the Actress to move gradually from a lark into a claustrophobic nightmare. Richard Paul wrote in Atlantic Provinces Book Review that “Sharon Pollock is one of only a handful of playwrights in Canada who have put together a solid and developing body of work over a number of active years in the theatre, and of that handful she is one of the best”. (19).

In the game, Miss. Lizzie has complete control of the Actress, and helps the actress to paint the background to move step by step on the strange winding path that leads to murder. Following Miss. Lizzie’s hypnotic account of her dream of the mask and the scene that depicts her father’s axe - murder of the birds, the Actress is face to face with the horrible imagining of murder. Lizzie pleads with her sister to stay and join forces with her to prevent the loss of their inheritance. The Actress’s foreknowledge informs her that if Lizzie is left alone, there are only two choices left, suicide or murder. W.H. New has said of the plays of the 1970’s that "such works do not interest themselves in what historians have received as ‘fact’ so much as they seek to reinterpret or
reclaim the past from one particular interpretation of it, with an eye on some present tension". (253). Lizzie realizes that to continue her life in her parent's house is a slow death of her ideals and the imprisonment of her independence. Miss. Lizzie's climatic bit of stage directing is evident in the Actress's lines; "I want to die. I want to die, but something inside won't let me... inside something says no (She shuts her eyes) I can do anything". (614). The incidents that happen in her family confirm the idea that murder is all that is left. The Border household, already claustrophobic and volatile, becomes a domestic hell when Lizzie finds about the transfer of his property to his wife. Unlike Ibsen's Hedda Gabler, Pollock's Lizzie has an incredibly strong sense of self-worth.

Feminism and metadrama intersect in the role-playing of Blood Relations. The character of Lizzie Borden is portrayed at the point of intersection. Her female identity is challenged by the social role playing that is imposed on her by family and the rest of society in 1892 and by the Actress performance in 1902. The first kind of role playing done by Lizzie in 1892 deals with feminist concern. The role playing done by the Actress and Lizzie is metadramatic. Lizzie's father acknowledges her, when she reflects her father's idea of femininity. Susan Stratton observes about the dramatic presentation, "In the foreground of our collective world view, Frye observes, is "Phallocratic
"Reality” constructed by men and presented as objective reality. The analogue is dramatic realism, which depends on sustaining the on stage illusion of reality”. (68).

Lizzie who is independent and strong minded is affected by Mr. Borden’s slaughter of Lizzie’s birds. Later Lizzie reflects on her father’s destruction of the birds she loved and her father drowning a puppy during one of her childhood stays at the family farm. She feels that the puppy was ‘different’ and it is destroyed by her father. She asserts the idea that ‘different’ things are killed by her father. Blood Relations as a feminist play which deals not only with the feminist study of social roles but also about a study of sophisticated metadramatic exploration of role playing. Lizzie’s choice of murder in response to the threat of self-destruction is brought out by her.

Miss Lizzie/ : It would lie at the back of the box, she would
Bridget lie in front of it while she nursed all the others.

They ignored it, that puppy didn’t exist for the others. I think inside it was different... And papa took it and drowned it. That’s what you do on a farm with things that are different.

Actress / Lizzie : Am I different?

Miss Lizzie : You Kill them. (608)
Direct presentation of the events or characters of 1892 is avoided by Pollock. But through her dream ‘thesis’ she portrays all the characters through Lizzie’s imagination. Miss. Lizzie who has tried and acquitted does not come out with the truth. Historically, the ambiguity is maintained by not revealing the real murderer. Meta dramatically, Pollock depicts the identities of Miss. Lizzie and the Actress to maintain the central ambiguity of the play. Pollock observes, “This basic framework of the play based on the idea of the relationship between Miss. Lizzie and the Actress, and their role exchange, sets up resonances”. (quoted in Wandor 123)

Pollock achieves the desired ambiguity through the device of the Actress’s creation and her enactment of the murders. While feminism rejects conventional social roles, metadrama subverts dramatic conventions by spotlighting the relationship between drama and life. Hornby points out, that metadrama is about the means of perception and to present our experiences in dramatic form “it occurs whenever the subject of a play turns out to be, in some sense, drama itself”. (31). Miss. Lizzie helps the Actress to understand the family relationships and the situation in their early stage of role playing. The Actress gains confidence and blends into the role of Lizzie. The Actress’s performance of Lizzie’s actions on the day of murders is
uninfluenced by Miss. Lizzie / Bridget. During the murder scene Miss. Lizzie / Bridget is mostly absent from the stage. Bridget enters twice to instruct the Actress / Lizzie, who leads Miss. Borden upstairs to her death and when she picks up the axe to murder her father as he sleeps. Hornby observes the central device of role-playing, which raises questions of identity and reminds us, "that all human roles are relative, that identities are learned rather than innate". (72).

The Actress’s creation of Lizzie as an axe murderer is very clear and psychologically convincing leading to the truth of the events just witnessed and the characterization of Lizzie as feminist heroine. Pollock’s theatricality of the blackout before the ‘on stage’ murder accompanied by a scream raises the doubt whether it is Lizzie / Bridget or Actress / Lizzie. Lizzie who is depicted as a strong and independent person in 1892, after the murder of her parents still lives with her conventional sister in the same house. Her wish of living in a corner house on the hill remains unrealized. Lizzie’s relationship with the unconventional Actress reveals that she is still chained to the old values. After the murder of her parents, she is able to free herself from the social roles imposed on her by the society. Her independence helps to maintain a socially unacceptable relationship with the Actress. Lizzie has attained freedom from the social constraints;
Emma : That... Actress who's come up from Boston.

Miss. Lizzie : What about her?

Emma : People talk

Miss Lizzie : You needn't listen

Emma : In your position you should do nothing to inspire talk (633).

Pollock from this play raises important feminist issues by moving her focus of attention from an interior, psychological study of a maddened individual to the female empowerment. The power of patriarchy in the Victorian society is recognized by the people. Even though she is acquitted of the murders, she continues to be plagued by the question of her guilt. The irony is that the Actress discovers what she would do in Lizzie’s circumstances, though she does not know what Lizzie did. Pollock observes,

I am saying all of us are capable of murder given the right situation. The structure is a way of maintaining the ambiguity. You see I don’t say that Lizzie did it. The defense says she’s not guilty the actress says she’s guilty (quoted in Wallace and Zimmerman 123).

In the final scene, Lizzie is annoyed by Emma’s persistent questions whether Lizzie committed the murders. The Actress projects herself into a situation described by Lizzie and creates a Lizzie who
murders her parents. Emma has created Lizzie to respond to a situation. This act of 'creation' suggests a parallel between the Actress's creation of Lizzie and Emma's creation of Lizzie in which the life and art fade into insignificance. To answer Emma's persistent question, Lizzie points out,

Miss. Lizzie: It was you who brought me up, like a mother to me.

Almost like a mother. Did you, ever stop and think that I was like a puppet, your puppet..... me spewing forth, me hitting out, and you you...(634-635).

A feminist reading of the play reveals that all the three women - Bridget, Actress, and Lizzie share complicity in the murder. The 'onstage' murder is highly stylized and it is not depicted clearly. Dramatically the truth is revealed that 'Lizzie' is a murderer. The Actress's dramatic portrayal of Lizzie's life is arresting and it convinces the audience about the reality. The fascination with the connection between the mode and the material - between the 'theatrical' and the 'true' remains central. Knowles has argued that in the productions of Pollock, Salutin, and Reaney, there is an emphasis on the "role of the audience in the 'realization' of the past". (237).

Ironically, Lizzie is saved from the accusation of the murders when the defense makes clear that a gentlewoman who has
received the fullest amenities of the society is not capable of murdering her parents. Pollock’s depiction of the two Lizzies on stage invites audience interpretation of the drama. Pollock points out, “observers, the audience, observing and participating as an audience in the action of an Actress playing Lizzie - multi-level interaction occurring between characters and enriched by the audience’s varying perceptions and awareness of it”. (quoted in Wandor 123).

Due to the cold-blooded criminal act, both Borden and his wife were killed by blows from an axe. The defense proclaims that Lizzie is innocent. But ten years later the question still lingers. Her sister Emma and her lover the Actress, badger her for the truth. On the surface it might appear that Lizzie is a criminal and Pollock portrays it as a blurred area. The evidence presented in Pollock’s play seems to confirm Lizzie’s acceptance of the murder. When the family refuses to accept her as an individual Lizzie becomes a victim. John Simon reviews the play;

*It is this most successful Canadian playwright’s notion; however that Lizzie was a lesbian feminist as well as free and cultural spirit stifling in the burg of Fall River. When her father kept signing over more and more of her rightful inheritance to his crude wife and her cruder
brother, and would not listen to reason, what else was Lizzie to do? (78)

Some male critics like S.R. Gilbert perceive Blood Relations as a sociological or Psychological study of woman. Instead of suffering destruction, Lizzie chooses to be a destroyer and takes the role of a Killer. The feminist politic of the play is visible in Lizzie Borden's transformation from repressed daughter to a successful feminist in the Victorian society. The slaughter of the birds is an indicator or a pointer that she will also be attacked by her father if she resists patriarchal control. The play deals with the struggle to the breaking point between personal integrity and larger force that denies it. The two players return with unexpected troubling recognitions that they both arrive at from having played the game. The Actress learns that her friend could have hacked two people to death. In the last line of the play she realizes that she herself could kill Mr. Borden and his wife. When the Actress acts out her life, Lizzie comes face to face with her elder sister Emma and experiences a horrifying moment of self-e estrangement in which she views herself as a stranger and her sister as the manipulator. The Actress arrives at the conclusion;

Emma : You didn't ...... did you?

Miss. Lizzie : Poor ...... Emma
Lizzie's final gesture, an accusatory finger pointed at the audience, is a call for the viewer to look at their own prejudices and preconceptions of what is "normal" and "acceptable". In accusing the audience of the crime, Lizzie conveys the idea that by imposing strict rules for woman, nineteenth century society is just as guilty of the Borden murders as the woman who picked up the axe. Paul Mathew St. Pierre, praised Pollock for her ability to reach audiences in "imaginatively and strikingly unconventional manners". The critic lauded her for the use of the dream thesis in which the past is enacted through the Actress. He considers this technique far more creating dramatic suspense than the actual physical action of the axe, "This technical accomplishment, more than anything else is the source of the play's triumph". (302)

Sharon Pollock in this play raises several questions to know the truth. Throughout the play, there are more questions raised than answered. The audience expects empirical evidence regarding the murder in the play. The Defense attorney questions, Lizzie and her
maid. But their authenticity is neglected, because the events are being recounted by Lizzie. By presenting the evidence of the case through the memory of the accused, there is no certainty that the events portrayed are real or figments of Lizzie's imagination. Although the play is based on an actual event, Pollock goes beyond the historical facts to enter the mind and delve into the motivation of her central character Lizzie. While the end results are the same, Mr. Borden and his wife are dead and Lizzie has been acquitted of the crime, Pollock raises questions as to the actual path taken to reach the results. Pollock forces the audience to question their own assumptions and conclusions about the truth of things. John Simon calls this a routine play,

Sharon Pollock's 'Blood Relations' is quite routinely boring - Lizzie Borden may not be the most original subject for the stage (Elsie Borden, might have been more interesting) but a woman who, as Miss. Pollock plainly suggests, could axe her father and stepmother to death in 1893, and even in those pre-Alan Der Shovitz days, get herself acquitted, is not likely, you would think, to yield an infinitely talky, monotonous and in most ways unsurprising play. (78)

Pollock discusses the sacredness of life in this play. Lizzie raises the question whether all life is precious. She is not looking for an answer from Dr. Patrick, because she rejects immediately the
affirmative response he offers. She can not accept the life of the 'fat
cow' (her stepmother) is precious, so she pursues the question further.
She poses an ethical enigma to the Doctor, "If a dreadful accident occurred
and two people were dying...but you could only save one which would you
save?". (624).

Lizzie is rationalizing the murder of her parents to
preserve a way of life for her and her sister. In Lizzie's mind murder
becomes logical and acceptable. An analogy is made to puppies on the
farm and helps her to further rationalize her assumptions that bad
elements must be removed so that the regularity can be maintained.
John Ashington writes in his review that, "Lizzie's situation is of her time :
today, she would be gone". (263).

Pollock delivers her first anti-documentary. Bessai
observes, "An implicit critique of documentary drama's basic assumption
that the truth can be demonstrably discovered in an investigatory dramatis
structure". (132). The play moves into a new angle dealing with the
crisis of individuals forced to decide whether to obey the authority or
their own conscience. Lizzie Borden the first female protagonist of
Pollock, does not concede to the demands of the authoritarian
structure. Lizzie refuses to be a victim, refuses self-sacrifice to choose
murder as a creative solution.
Pollock neglects the traditional theatre practice that divides performers from audience. Pollock wants to emphasize the similarities and blur the distinctions between audience and performer. This merger of audience and performers come from a feminist belief in bonding women in community to resist the decisive patriarchy. Pollock’s *Blood Relations* reaches the audience in a striking manner. Pollock’s theatre device of role-playing marks the unique relationship of performers and audience to bring out the change on both sides of the performing line and raises the curiosity of the audience.

Feminists believe that women face oppression in the contemporary male dominated society. The play *Blood Relations* is a feminist play in that it presents the oppression of women in the family and the resistance to patriarchy. In the post colonial feminist discourse of the 80s and 90s, the women categorized the race and class and challenge the notion of ‘universal sisterhood’. When the play *Blood Relations* is viewed from a non-white women’s perspective, it subscribes to and endorses the stereotypical images constructed and perpetrated by whites about ‘other’ women denying equality to them. Pollock portrays the double oppression faced by the ‘other’ woman, Bridget in the play. Harry behaves indecently to Bridget by demanding a kiss and later tilting his ass at her. This shows how the white men
treat other women as a wanton seducer. This racial and class distinction in 'Blood Relations' defeats Pollock's feminist stance. Bridget considers Lizzie's direct confrontation with the patriarchal power structure as dangerous for a woman of her class and race. Bridget narrates how a servant adds 'cut up hair' on omelets served to master. Bridget wants to get along with the hostile world with her smile by conforming to the stereotype image of women. The while middle class feminists insist that racism / classicism are not a feminist issue and it is disapproved by coloured feminists.

With Lizzy Borden, Pollock deals with a woman who wants more control over life than she's allowed to have by the society and the family in which she finds herself trapped. Even though Lizzie Borden is possibly a murderess she has her finger on the inequalities and duplicity of her society. Lizzie refuses definition by society and she hands Emma the responsibility for having defined her in the family. Lizzie disappears into non-entity, supplanted in our minds by the role created by the Actress.

Blood Relations is a feminist play in that it analyses the restrictions of women's role in the family imposed by the society and the feminist emphasis on the possibility for transformation to achieve freedom. Lizzie could not remain inactive like Emma or make the
required wedding like Mr. Borden. The obvious issue discussed in the play is the endorsement of female empowerment, Lizzie's blind whims, convictions, her value towards life and her aim to achieve freedom helps her to gain power in family.

**DRAMATIC TECHNIQUES**

In *Blood Relations* Pollock has successfully moved the audience emotionally and distanced them intellectually by creating an anti-documentary play. Pollock uses the documentary presentational strategy of interaction between investigation and reconstruction to know the truth of Lizzie's life. The outer play is dramatically a more sophisticated development of the various presentational narrating devices Pollock hitherto attempted. Here, the Actress, an outsider participates in the process of discovering answers to important questions. The Actress is more personally involved in her action and concludes the play 'Lizzie you did'. In 1970's Pollock's history plays of the 1970's were part of a larger trend in which the theatre was used to examine significant incidents and problems in Canadian history. The connection between the 'theatrical' and 'true' remains central in *Blood Relations*. 
It is a ‘play within a play’ and Pollock calls it the dream thesis. The use of ‘game device’ in the play is a favourite device of the playwright and it is integrated into the action. In this ‘dream thesis’ enactment of the two days leading to the Borden’s murder, the other participants emerge in the flashback as required. One can not see clear entrances and exits. The actors leave in and out of the present and past. There are only three real characters on stage—Lizzie, The Actress and sister Emma. The others are pulled up from the memories of the 1892 event. In the play within a play, the Actress takes up Lizzie’s role and Lizzie takes up Bridget’s roles. Sometimes Lizzie steps out of her role and guides Actress/ Lizzie to play the role. Though this role playing of the events occurred in 1892, Pollock encourages the audience to view Lizzie’s life through the eyes of an outsider to the family. This technique effectively illuminates the personal path that Lizzie’s took to the murders. Pollock has newly introduced ambiguity in Blood Relations apart from the feminist aspect of the play. Pollock has stated that “she began Blood Relations as a naturalistic play and then ‘re-wrote’ believing the fascination lay in the ambiguity – Did she? Didn’t she”? (quoted in Wandor 123) The ambiguity is maintained throughout the play by the fact that although Lizzie is acquitted, no one else was ever convicted of the murder.
In *Blood Relations*, Feminism and Metadrama intersect in the game device. The metadrama in the play examines the drama's conventions, the language and the dramatic presentation. When Lizzie deals with her family problems it shows the feminist concern and when the Actress enacts Lizzie's part in a play within the play, it becomes metadramatic. It brings out the highly theatrical depiction of the slaughter of the birds - and her old memories, regarding her puppy leading to her murder of her parents. The play is not only a feminist study of social roles but a sophisticated metadramatic exploration of role-playing.

Non-naturalistic devices is the central device of role-playing which raises questions of identity when Actress / Lizzie picks up an axe to kill her father and mother, the black out occurs and a chilling scream is heard to heighten the seriousness of the situation. It is Pollock's theatricality to underscore the horror of the moment. The dream sequence is part of the structure that incorporates a 'Play within a Play, where action and conflict are happening on different levels. (Ex) Lizzie in one of her speeches, described about a dream of seeing herself on a carousel wearing a mask with no eyes behind it. This dream is related to her relationship with her father. It shows that she should blindly accept her father's way of life without her own identity.
The 'Eyes' refer to Miss. Lizzie's link to the bright eyes of love she sees in her pet birds that her father kills with an axe. When the dream progresses, the audience is unable to keep a distance with the characters on stage. There is always a question of what is real and what is not.

The flashbacks are not played in a straightforward fashion. Events from the present, the trials and the days leading up to the murder in the past are jumbled together and it shows the randomness of dreams and memories. The drama is more powerfully convincing than the theoretical possibility of a different reality. In the play's conclusion the audience receives the instruction to dismiss the staged events as just an imaginative construct of the Actress. In Pollock's theatre we find a unique relationship of performers and audience mutual and ongoing struggle when a performer and audience as a member become partners in a process that moved towards change on both sides of the performing line.

The audience is trying to find out the truth from the version of both Actress / Lizzie and Lizzie / Bridget. The playwright's discussion of a different subject matter is brought out through the structure of the play. Through this structure, the historical becomes a metaphor for a more contemporary women's theme.
THE LANGUAGE

The play weaves in two important images - The hatchet and the pigeons. The birds are brought up by Lizzie and they represent the part of Lizzie that can fly, that can be free. (Ex) It reflects Lizzie’s flirtation with Dr. Patrick and her fantasies of stepping off to Boston with him. Like the birds which are caged, Lizzie is also tied down. The birds’ link to Lizzie is further illustrated when Borden kills them. Just as he literally cuts them to pieces, he figuratively cuts Lizzie off from the life she desires, shattering her dreams.

In the beginning of the play, when Harry wields the hatchet, it appears like a symbol of masculinity. When Lizzie takes the hatchet to her stepmother and father, the control is usurped. The hatchet gives Lizzie value in the community and acts as the instrument of liberation from her oppressive parents. The hatchet is symbolic of Lizzie’s ability to transcend the patriarchy which enslaved her Lizzie has several semi – poetic soliloquies in the play especially when she describes her dream. The play is notable for the strength of its writing. The dialogue is spare and laconic but rich in subject. The play is also known for its metaphorical density. The words eyes, poison, birds, animals rear through the script. The play is also filled with the found metaphors of naturalism: the cage, the hatchet, staircase, money,
newspaper, coffee and so on. The montage structure characteristic of much of her work is further developed in the play. The juxtaposition of 1892 and 1902 scenes has a compelling inner logic. Act I’s steadily accelerating rhythm successfully fuses with the gradually intensifying stillness of Act II. The play is different from other historical plays, due to its metaphoric quality.

Pollock’s continuing concern with forced compliance, with the merger of self with something ‘bigger’ takes an interesting turn in her next play Whiskey Six Cadenza. The play was originally produced by Theatre Calgary, 10 Feb 1983. As in Blood Relations a young woman confronts her authoritarian father when his control over her life becomes intolerable.

The play is set in the Crowsnest pass, in the small border town of Blairmore in 1919 and 1920. It is a large play with a cast of thirteen characters. Brian Brennan observes “It was originally conceived as a musical radio documentary about a Crowsnest pass rum-runner whose mistress was hanged for shooting a prohibition Policeman”. (F1). The stage directions call for an elaborate set, which in the premiere involved mirrors, screen projections and vague smoky images. The two primary acting areas include the Alberta Hotel lounge and the Farley Kitchen in the background of the Crowsnest pass landscape. “Behind the town
surrounding it is the gossamer depiction of the rolling hills, the misty mountains but seen from a different perspective". (141).

The play begins and ends with dance sequences, voiceovers, "Images and figures often appear fractured, refracted, fragmented". (141) The play begins with Mrs. Farley's song, about her son. The song expresses the inner reflections of a mother who reminds the audience about their social responsibility to vote to save somebody's boy. "The breweries don't care if they do, ----- And vote to save somebody's boy". (143). The son young Johny Farley unexpectedly return to Blairmore. He wants to avoid the miner's life, to avoid the fate of his two dead brothers. Mrs. Farley comments, "There's your father dying of the lungs". (145) The legendary rumrunner Mr. Big becomes the exciting centre of Blairmore small town life. Mr. Big has chosen Leah as his daughter, as she had the potential to love, to be honest and loyal, when she was eleven years old, But Mr. Big's illegal business is challenged by the Alberta Prohibition police Mr. Bill Windsor to catch Mr. Big in his nefarious dealings in the bar of the Alberta hotel. Though Pollock deals with the social issues of the times Prohibition and Temperance, she has focused her attention on the women characters who play crucial roles in the play. Ann.F.Nothof observes Sharon Pollock's style, "Sharon Pollock shows that public policy is predicated on and effected through
individual choices. Although her protagonists are subject to large historical or political forces, they still have a degree of freedom of choice". (83.)

Mr. Big the local rumrunner uses his six cylinders McLaughlin car for bootlegging operations. He represents the authoritarian father figure for Leah in the play. Since Johny could not find work, he works for the bootlegger Mr. Big. Mr. Big's wife is not addressed Mrs. Big and she is called Mama George. Mama George realizes that acquiring identity is more complex than simply accepting the conventional role of wife. She expresses "can only be one Big in a family". (188)

Earlier in the play, Leah who is eleven years old experiences a sense of loss due to her misery. Her lack of economic security and emotional strength makes her to depend on Mr. Big. Leah is forced to perceive her self-identity through the limitations of the patriarchal system. Her early life in the orphanage and the sufferings in the home enter inner psyche. Miller observes, "women are taught that their main goal in life is to serve others-first men, and later, children". (62) Leah is unaware of the opportunities for self-development offered by the New world, where she can shape her individual potential and identity. She limits her role in the family as a 'chosen daughter' to Mr. Big. Mama George ironically comments about her sexual
relationship with her husband, “He picked her up and he brought her home and he gave her everything a mama who loves her, a mama she loves him who adores her – and you”. (209). In the traditional male-dominated society, she is forced to take up the unconventional life in Big’s family. When Mr. Big seduces her, Leah strives to achieve a sense of place within the family of Mr. Big without a clear plan of her future.

Pollock has distanced herself from the present contemporary society by exploring the controversial era from the Canadian past. She portrays how prohibition affects the small Crowsnest pass mining town of Blairemore in 1919 and 1920. Pollock depicts how authoritarian regulation destroys freedom of choice and self-responsibility for Leah and how she attempts to come to terms with herself to reach self-definition. Miller points out, “if women did not have needs of their own, as if one could serve others without simultaneously attending to one’s own interests and desires”. (62)

Pollock succeeds in her attempt in the dramatic integration of her women characters in the male dominated world. The heart of the play is Johny and Leah’s love story. On the personal side Johny and Leah enjoy the apparent freedom of romantic reality. Mr. Big’s ambiguous relationship to his chosen daughter Leah, calls for the careful examination of the autocratic behaviour of Mr. Big. His
relationship to the women in the family brings out the unpleasant truth that women's power of choice in the family is limited. Even though her power of choice, is limited in the family, Leah’s love towards Johny helps her to reclaim her autonomy. She expresses her feelings to her lover Johny,

"why did you say those things to me?. You felt like you knewed me for a hundred years, that's what you said, and you liked me and tried to make me say them too and now you just... why did you do that? I'm not letting’ you go till you tell me." (206).

Leah’s realization of self fulfilment and the discovery of her individuality reveal her feelings of failure. She struggles to free herself from her father who represents corruption in the outside world. Mr. Big infact imposes his own version, a version which rationalizes the sexual abuse of a small girl in a new environment. Griffin reiterates the abuse of women as ‘mass terrorism’. He adds, “The Victims of rape are chosen indiscriminately, but the propagandists for male supremacy broadcast that it is women who cause rape by being unchaste or in the wrong place at the wrong time – in essence, by having as though they were free”. (21).

Sharon Pollock reaches the audience in a striking manner through her social criticism. Mrs.Farley, Johny’s mother is a strict
temperance zealot. Johny is the favourite child of his mother but he alienates his mother by going to work for Mr. Big. Mrs. Farley wants to take desperate steps to take him back to Dominion colliery. She expresses that being involved with the people from the Alberta Hotel, is a greater evil than Dominion colliery. She finds liquor's danger to the soul far worse than the mine's damage to the body. Pollock portrays how Mr. Big is volubly opposed to prohibition and to laws which restrict personal freedom. Mrs. Farley expresses, “I'll tell you.... every bit a my bein’ is consumed with one thing, to keep some vestige a hope in my soul bargaining, with the Lord to spare one a my sons”. (199) Sharon Pollock through the creation of the character of Mrs. Farley brings out the destructive power of liquor on people.

The central issue depicted in the play is the freedom of choice. The play brings to life the social issues of its day prohibition, temperance and sexual abuse. Mr. Big has chosen that name for himself and as a charismatic figure he is fully in command of his own destiny. He speaks in an inflated hyperbolic style and thinks of himself as an agent who can transform this ghost town into the flourishing city of Blairmore. He always emerges as a man championing the cause of free choice and he is a believer of individualism and progress. He has earned love and affection from his family members his wife and Leah.
He says “For governments remove choice……. It’s only when individuals choose and suffer the consequences of their actions that humanity can progress” (236). Sharon Pollock as a social playwright offers solution to find a way to eliminate social evils. Through her public and personal dimensions Pollock turns to the theme of freedom of choice exemplified by Mr. Big and Leah. Mr. Big likes to denigrate government for its denial of the right of individual choice in the public level. On the personal level the crux is his relationships to the women in the family and there lies the essential drama of the play. Atwood points out the suppression of women, “the loving, potentially beautiful women trapped inside a negative shell”. (200).

In the process to becoming an independent person, Leah discovers that her own power of choice is limited. Leah who loves Johny, does not have the chance to question Mr. Big until the advent of Johnny. When, Big said “I want to take you”. (219). Leah who so far attempted to adjust to Big’s values, now decides to come to terms with herself and forges a new identity to reject his invitation. Firestone calls this oppression of women as “the tyranny”. (193). In her struggle for self-development, she becomes assertive and consoles Dolly,

Leah :  It is past and over and done with

Dolly :  No

128
Leah : You gotta forget about will
Dolly : I don’t want to
Leah : You gotta start fresh (224)

Pollock portrays a symbolic revolution whereby Leah overthrows the patriarchal throne and confronts the limited power of women in the family. Her sense of insecurity in the reality is magnified by the approach of Mr.Big. Her longing for a meaningful life with Johny gives her confidence to forget the unpleasant incidents that happened in the past. She convinces Dolly to forget about Will and tears his photograph. “Leah grabs the photograph of Will from Dolly and tears it into little pieces which drops on the floor. Dolly moves as if to bend down to what? – pick them up? Leah puts her foot over them”. (224)

The play expounds the concept that man imposes his will on both women and society in order to exorcise his fear of the irrational, and instinctive Leah realizes that she is sexually abused by Mr.Big and she defies the patriarchal father who initiates her downfall. Leah articulates her betrayal by the father – Mr. Big, who institutes the subjection of female power by seducing her. Leah understands her state of despair and she is conscious of her own tenuous existence in the family which is constantly being threatened. When Leah speaks out against Mr.Big, he could not accept the fact, that the girl who
remained silent so far, raises her voice against his control over her life. De Beauvoir points out, the male domination, "He exploits her, but she crushes him, he is born of her and dies in her, she is the source of his being and the realm that he subjugates to his will". (162).

Mr. Big wants to continue his relationship with Leah and Leah finds Mr. Big's power disturbing. By subduing Leah to his will, he tries to take possession of the life of Leah. His wife Mama George convinces him.

_Mama George:_ 'in so far glorious construction a the universe

_based on nothin' more than the frail embrace of a child?_

_Mr. Big:_ .......... Would it be ...... anyless valid were

_that to be so?

_Mama George:_ Children grow up". (234).

As a traditional woman Mama George is confined to work within the home. She accepts her husband's illegal business and his illegal relationship with their chosen daughter Leah. Mama George can identify herself with the patriarchal definition of women as wives and mothers. She finds her marriage with Mr. Big as a way of finding security and social acceptance. Ruether describes man's superior status as, "hierarchical chain of being and chain of command". (162) Mama
George’s conversation with Mr. Big brings out her love for him. But Mama George is not afraid to point out that he seduced the little girl Leah.

Leah’s experiences of humiliation and cruelty in the orphanage make her to take refuge in Mr. Big’s family. The exploration of her inner female consciousness is left untouched by Mr. Big. Leah when she was eleven years old, tried to run away from the orphanage to avoid humiliation. Mr. Big picks her up from the streets to give her life. As a child Leah could not resist Mr. Big, when he seduced her. In that moment of despair, she accepts her unconventional life in Mr. Big’s home. She does not have the strength to find a way out of the misery and to plan for a better future.

Mama George : She was tired of runnin’
Mr. Big : She did not say that
Mama George : I know what she said. With what devices could a child resist? (37)

The focus of the play shifts to the transformation in the character of Leah. She questions her role in the family and plans to make her own choice in a setting with opposing values. She clings to the belief that her life with Johnny will give her protection. Even though Mr. Big is a powerful male persona of the patriarchal
tradition, Leah with her strong will tries to emerge as a strong personality to take her own decision on an individual level, leading to the realization of her female power. "The quest for authenticity and power" (Christ 154) provokes her to take a decision to leave Mr.Big. But Mr. Big’s fantasy to live with ‘his chosen daughter’ and to have sexual relationship with her makes him to force Leah to stay in the house. Griffin observes, "Like all victims of terrorism, there is something awesomely accidental about her fate. She is like the duck flying in formation which the hunter chose to shoot-down – She appeared in his gun sight".(53) Mr. Big tries to convince Johnny that he loves Leah and he cannot lead his life without her. Johnny points out the young and creative self of Leah which is trapped by Mr.Big. Leah’s struggle to free herself from the negative perceptions of Mr.Big makes her to assert her identity. Mr.Big says, "The first time I saw Leah... I thought I’d slipped through a wrinkle in time and was seein’ myself" (241). Mr. Big is trying to rationalize the sexual abuse of Leah by saying, “I ask you. Look at her... of course I love her who would not love her” (242).

Leah envisions a revolution in the family by rebelling against her father Mr.Big to assert her individual power. She realizes that as a woman and as a victim, she is denied recognition as an equal. Her female consciousness fluctuates between her past memories of
despair and her hope for the future. Leah could not disclose to Johnny her secret relationship with Mr.Big. She is forced by Big not to reveal her sexual relationship with others. Pollock points out,

A woman's life teaches her many things: to trust less the exterior and seek the interior, not to fear multiplicity, having multiple selves within herself; to be suspicious of certainty and to entertain ideas of contraction and diversity, along with unity and singularity. (12).

The play echoes Pollock's claim that individuals in the family should have freedom to make their own choice. As an expression of this optimistic thinking of Pollock, the chosen child 'Leah wants to exercise her own choice of leaving Mr.Big, to join Johnny. Leah wants to project to the world, the dark side of Mr.Big's personality and his blind selfishness in his abuse of Leah. The mythic shape he gives to experience disguises reality and masks exploration.

Leah : Did ----- Did you think you could just tell a story and everything would be right?

Pause He ever finds out --- what will I do? and If he believes you......... how can I love like that?’ (245).

In Whisky Six Cadenza the family dynamics are even more unwholesome than in Blood Relations. The 'chosen child' in Mr.Big's family is denied a separate identity because Mr. Big wants Leah
constantly by his side. His sexual relationship with Leah in the family, brings out his animal instinct which is present in him. When Mr. Big asks her to stay back in the family, Leah voices her traumatic experiences in the family and her longing to leave Mr. Big.

Leah : " I am tired of pretending... why didn't you leave me, Mr. Big? why didn’t you leave me that day in the rain? ..... But you can still make it right. Yes you can.
She picks up the gun. Here Take it ... Hold it Mr. Big."

(245).

Immediately after acknowledging that Leah loves Johny, he brings out the gun which he keeps behind the bar. The freedom of choice is exercised by Mr. Big and Leah in the play. Mr. Big must accept the consequences of his choice of the 'Chosen daughter' Leah's love affair with Johny and 'make it right' for Leah to join her lover. Leah exercises her choice by picking up the gun and handing it to Mr. Big to take away the life he gave her. When Mr. Big sees she is leaving him to preserve his fantasy, he commits the ultimate violence. The public jurisdiction of choice ends in destructive personal relationships in the family.

Mrs. Farley, the mother of Johny who leads the conventional life, wants to protect her son Johny from the miner's life.
Through her solitary contemplations about the hardships of her life, she is trying to arrange a new life for her son. The family's sense of loss is portrayed through Mrs. Farley. She describes the fate of her two dead sons and her husband's shocking working conditions which affect his lungs. Pollock turns her focus of attention from the central protagonist Leah to Mrs. Farley. In her struggle to save her son, from the bootlegger Mr. Big, she asks the society to eradicate the social evils like Prohibition and Temperance. Atwood comments about mothers, "They live their lives with intensity but through gritted teeth, and they are often seen as malevolent sinister or life-denying, either by themselves or by other characters in their books". (199)

Mrs. Farley shows the intense concern for the future of Johny, with her sense of power in the domestic realm, she directs the lives of her offspring. "Mrs. Farley! I'll tell you... every bit a my bein' is consumed with one thing, to keep some vestige a hope in my soul .... bargaining' with the Lord to spare one a my sons" (199). Mrs. Farley voices out the corruption of the outside world, especially Mr. Big's business which threatens the moral and religious fibre of her family. Even though she is alienated in the family by her son, she gains power in the domestic realm by struggling to keep her son safe from the hostile forces of the Canadian society.
In *Whiskey Six Cadenza* Pollock portrays how the women in the play gain power by facing the repressions of patriarchal power structure in the Canadian society. Leah who remains powerless in her earlier life, voices her personal sense of loss in the family. Though there is a sense of sadness at the end of the play, it is combined with Leah’s acceptance and understanding of loss. Through her death, she obtains the ultimate connection with her own self, and freedom from the clutches of her father Mr. Big. Her death has brought about a deeper awareness of her own individuality and identity in the family. Leah by articulating her inner consciousness about her freedom of choice opposes woman’s oppression in the family. Through her subsequent choice of death, she confirms her power she acquired in her life. The play portrays the distortion of human behaviour of Mr. Big and how Leah uses her free choice to liberate herself from the clutches of her father leading to her empowerment. Sharon Pollock’s examination of the politics of the family brings out personal and family related conflicts, which help the female protagonists to go through the process of empowerment.
DRAMATIC TECHNIQUES

The play was originally conceived as a musical radio documentary. The stage directions included an elaborate set, mirrors, screen projections and smoky images. The play begins and ends with dances and voice-overs. This technique reflects the mood of the characters in the play. "In the beginning of the play, Mr. Big voice-over – and around ..... and around .... and around Leah ; Voice-overs. my head .......". (141) At the end of the play the voice-overs again reflect their status in life and all the characters in the play take part in these voice-overs. "Leah ; voice-over was it? Mr. Big ; voice-over. Invincible, Leah". (246)

Bessai comments about the theatricality of the play, "impressionist interweaving of musical and visual images compositely create a pattern of the multiple realities that fatefuly dominate the lives of the characters" (133). The memory recall of the final scene, brings into light how Leah is picked up from the street by Mr. Big. The play in its Prohibition setting serves the fictional circumstances rather than an overt didacticism. In the play, the dramatic obliquity serves the ambiguity in the family relationship of Mr. Big. The sound of the marching bands is an indication of a new life for Johny. The whistle of the train indicates the important decisions taken by the characters.
THE LANGUAGE

The language is a vital element which makes Pollock’s plays distinct in Canada. The characters in Whiskey Six Cadenza speak Prairie language and it is their speech which brings credit to the dramatist. The Prairie language of the characters reflects their mode of thinking, speech and action and is a pointer to their culture.

Ex: Mrs. Farley I know it (..... It bein’ all over Blairmore, but someone, out a the goodness a their soul, or the pleasure they get from sorrowin’, someone did tell me, so I do know.

Johnny: ...................... Anyways ....... the fell a thanked me by havin’ a do (195)

If the old traditions and culture are to be reviewed, the language too will have to be brought to the centre stage of life. The deliberate use of Prairie language as a vehicle for the theme of identity reveals Pollock’s heightened sensibilities and idealistic notions of Prairie life. Thus Pollock has a complete grasp of the moods, deeds and modes of Prairie characters through the use of language. Indeed the Prairie language brings out a pattern, relationship and meaning for the welfare of the marginalised women in Canada.

In an interview with Anne F. Nothof Pollock calls Whiskey Six Cadenza as her favourite play, “I think in some respects, I
like whiskey six. I think it's a good play and it's interesting that nobody ever does it". (Quoted in Nothof 168).

In the play Doc, as in all of Pollock's plays since Blood Relations there is an overt feminist dimension, which needs to be explored. Doc was first produced in April 1984 and commissioned by Theatre Calgary. After extensive rewriting, the production was remounted at the Toronto Free Theatre the following September. It won the Governor General's Award for Drama in 1986. The play is the most intensely personal one Pollock has written to date and the autobiographical aspect of the play is undisguised, But Pollock has said, "If it was just my story I would have put it in a letter and sent it to my family. I wrote it because I had a need to write it". (quoted in Ashley 4)

Women's stories are refracted through multiple personas enacting different stages of their lives. The past is enacted in the present and one facet of character illuminates another. Since the memories from different time in the past take the stage, it is not always clear whose memory it is. Pollock portrays the conflict that lies between public and domestic responsibility in the play leading to Catherine's empowerment.

Doc takes the form of a memory play. Two characters share and shape the past conjured in the play. The lens through which
the memories are filtered is bifocal. The characters are able to talk to each other across the memory frame. Pollock splits the character of the daughter into an older and younger self-Catherine and Katie played by two different actors. Pollock comments about the characters in the play, "They aren't really the people I know any more. They started out that way but now have grown past them" (quoted in Brennan3).

The play Doc explores the sense of estrangement and the concomitant quest for self affirmation experienced by the women characters, Bob and Catherine in the male oppressive system. The play opens with the return of the partially estranged daughter Catherine to her home for a brief visit on the eve of the dedication of her father's hospital. Catherine and Ev watch the performance of young Katie and respond to her questions. The play exposes Catherine's struggle with her father Ev who is responsible for her mother's alcoholism. Ev's wife Bob blames Ev, "He doesn't care. He doesn't care about anything except his "Prac-tice" and his off-office' and his 'Off-fice nurse" and all those stupid, stupid people who think he's God". (6).

The play exemplifies the female protagonist's search for recognition in the burgeoning women's movement. The play examines Bob's disembodiment from her family through isolation, loneliness and lack of power. Ev is a tireless, dedicated family doctor and as pillar in
his society he eradicated several contagious diseases in his community. Now at the end of his career the community people construct a hospital and it is named in his honour. His mother had committed suicide but Ev calls it an ‘accident’. In the opening scene he looks at the unopened letter of his mother, in which his mother stated the reason for her death.

The political ramifications of gender keep Bob on the perimeter of life. The desire to restore her former state of happiness with her husband inspires her to question the patriarchal tradition. Bob strongly feels that Ev is responsible for his mother’s death. Ev neglects his wife and mother to work for the community as a full time doctor. Bob, says, “*your father’s mother your grandmother, killed herself Katie*” (4).

Even though Eve does not care about the family, Bob’s personal experiences in the family, awaken her silent consciousness from the silent darkness. Pollock’s father praises the play’s usefulness, “*Most people deny the pain associated with such family situations. But you’ve publicly acknowledged the pain. Everybody in that family is a victim*”. (Brennan 10) The historical oppression of women adds a further dimension to Bob’s experience of alienation in the family and she plans to contend with the patriarchal tradition to get her identity. When people consider her husband as a God, Bob calls him a murderer. As
the youngest child in the family Bob is supported by her mother and brothers. Bob also reveals that Eve is respected by people in society. Bob recalls, "He would step off the elevator – every nurse on the floor, “yes doctor” – “No Doctor” – “Is there anything else” dramatic pause”. (47)

Bob works as a nurse in Eve’s hospital and Eve falls in love with Bob. Eve’s mother criticises that Bob used the oldest trick in the book to catch Eve. As a traditional husband, Eve wishes to name his son after his brother George. Bob tries to make sense out of her own identity by expressing her wish to name her son William after her brother. But their first daughter Catherine is named after his mother.

Bob’s status in the family heightens her sense of insecurity in the male-dominated society. Bob wants to go back to her work after the birth of their first child Catherine. Eve reminds her of the domestic duties and refuses to send her out. Her sense of integration is incomplete, marred by the external limitations imposed upon her, Bob, says “you’re her father, you’re not home from one day to the next. What am I supposed to do, rattle around with a four-month old baby to talk to?”. (55)

Women have been denied intellectual work and men have the power to keep women in the shadow of ignorance due to their patriarchal hierarchy, Eve refuses by saying that doctors would not hire another doctor’s wife as an office nurse. Bob awakens out of her
domestic duties and begins to feel the energy rush through her vein. Bessai observes, “Personal relations are the continued subject of Doc but in a new thematic dimension for Pollock in which the conflict lies between public and domestic responsibility, although with the focus on the latter”. (62) Bob dislikes the social round of a doctor’s wife and finds that he is too busy with his patients to spare her enough time to compensate. Even though she had the potential to work as an efficient nurse, she has been denied the opportunity. Sharon Pollock in this play presents a vision of the world that is fragmented and incomplete because it has excluded the experiments of women. Each is deaf to the other’s point of view and the pattern of confrontation is set to indicate the inevitable disintegration of home life. She wants to acquire a sense of place by going out to work and she does not like to be viewed as Ev’s wife. She becomes aware of the potential for individuality beyond the limitations of social expectation. Bessai has commented about the pattern of Pollock’s work “the recurring pattern in the plays, ....... is of individual struggle against a social or political order of which the character is a part”. (62)

Through her fragmented state of consciousness, she brings out the role of her mother in bringing up the children in the family. She exposes her mother’s self sacrificing nature by giving up her own
needs for the benefit of her daughter, accepts the conventional role of mother. Bob’s mother cleans the floors of others to earn money to educate her daughter as a nurse. All her family people, mother, sisters and Bill worked hard to put her through nursing. Bob fulfilled the dream of her mother by becoming nurse. Her longing for something meaningful makes her emerge as a successful nurse, Bob recalls, “I don’t like the cleanin’ lady. Because every time ...... the cleanin’ lady comes in, I think of my Mama who cleaned all around so I could go into nursing” (71). Bob’s unfulfilled ambitions trigger the memory of her failed potential. She reveals her feelings of failure to her husband Ev to get away from the artificiality of her life. This realization leads her to bring into light, her husband’s illegal relationship with the nurse Valma. She says “Valma phoned and said he’d called her”. (75). Through her reflections, Bob discovers the ambiguity of marriage that people spend their lives together because they are afraid to lead an independent life. The larger issue of the play is Ev’s responsibility for his wife’s alcoholism. He stands accused by Bob who claims he doesn’t care about anybody. Bob feels confined, and thwarted by the conventional expectations that surround her and the autonomy denied to her. “In Pollock’s plays the central male figures fail to grow into heroes, instead gradually losing their sense of identity”. (Holder -108)
The cruelty and sense of loss is magnified by her alienation. She could not fit into the patriarchal society's mould as she was very ambitious and successful. As an achiever, she realizes that her career ends with her marriage. Her sense of entrapment and depression becomes acute on her onstage presence with a housecoat and slip. The haunting figure is the visual reality of her confinement. Her inability to accept her life makes her move to alcoholism to avoid her intolerable life with Ev she says 'I feel as if I've wasted something'. (60). Oscar's mother is stronger than Bob, in her decision to leave her family, "she had the good sense to get out". (35). It is a pointer that an alternative existed for Bob, to leave the artificiality of life. But with her own conflicts and character, she could not take any decision to lead an independent life and so commits suicide.

Catherine's re-entry into the family brings out an emotional maelstrom and shows the volatile and confrontational atmosphere where each episode portrays a charge or counter-charge. In the play an adolescent 'Katie' is observed from the perspective of an adult Catherine. Catherine watches and responds to her own on-stage younger self who is caught between a professionally pre-occupied father and an alcoholic mother. Katie brings out her personal guilt and learns about her mother.
The focus of the play shifts to Catherine's adult feminine perspective to Ev's autocratic behaviour towards women. Catherine's partial estrangement shows that she is the feisty unconventional daughter battling with her autocratic father and unsupported by her mother. Bessai calls Ev as a "dedicated humanitarian with a domestic blind spot." (35) She suffers from her own sense of personal fragmentation and alienation. Sharon Pollock in an interview said, "When I write I'm trying to explain to myself how it came to be as much as I am trying to explain to myself to other people". (quoted in Wallace and Zimmerman 115).

Catherine's contemplation sets the stage for the further exploration of her parents struggle, when Ev calls his wife as sick "your mother's sick" (6) Katie refuses to accept it. When her prayer is not answered by God, she says, "if there is a God, then I don't like him" (7). Catherine hates her mother's weakness in allowing herself to be self-absorbed in alcoholism. Katie shows her dislike for the terrible games of hide-the-bottle that Katie is forced to play, "In the clothes hamper with all the dirty clothes and things. And I took it and poured it down the sink and I went downstairs and I threw the empty bottle in the garbage. So don't tell me she's sick". (7).
Catherine admires her father’s strength, self-sufficiencies and his stubborn single-mindedness that made him such a good doctor, “you must be proud having the hospital named after you” (13). When Ev tries to impose the traditional role on her by asking her to raise a family she shows her female identity by accusing her father for driving her mother deeper into alcoholic depression. Catherine asks, “What family did you ever raise. You were never home from one day to the next so who are you to talk to me about family” (25).

Catherine rejects the conventional role of wife and mother to involve in her work. She carries a wound within her, a kind of internal hemorrhage made more acute by her perception of her father’s guilt in her mother’s death, Ev, says, “It was all my fault, go on, say it, I know what you think” (32) As a young Katie she could not conceal her rage to her mother. Katie as an independent person raises her voice against her mother. In the early part of the play, she could not realize her mother’s sense of power is contained within the domestic realm. Catherine comments. “I hate you and I wish that you were dead” (118) Catherine is aware of her individuality beyond the limitations imposed on her in the family. When Oscar, Ev’s friend is captivated by Bob and dance in the ball room with her, Katie feels that she can understand the relationship between her mother and Oscar - “I can figure things out”
Unlike her mother, Catherine asserts her identity by saying that she wants to go back to work. Although Catherine / Katie bears the name of her grandmother, she is adamant that she does not resemble her grandmother and mother.

Throughout the play Catherine / Katie worries and wonders about which of their parents they must resemble. Since her grandmother’s and mother’s female identity is chipped away by her autocratic father, she wants to cast her lot with the charismatic father who is strong. "Well I wouldn’t want to be like her side of the family. I’d rather be like his". (61). Katherine questions her father’s illegal affair with Valma. She expresses her hatred towards his wife and daughter she feels that her father does not show his intense concern for the future of the family. She struggles to free herself from the self sacrificing nature of her mother, ‘through whom the restrictions and degradations of a female existence were perforce transmitted’. (Rich 235) Catherine provokes her mother to have freedom in the house and asks her to do whatever she likes. Katherine is trying to impose her values on Bob.

Catherine who identifies her own individuality, obtains her free self to relieve herself from the constraints in the family as well as in the outside world. She hates her father’s selfishness and his
indifference to the family members. When her family trappings threaten her she overcomes her problems with strong will and decides to leave her family to shape her identity. When her father is busy with his work, Catherine asks him to stay in the house to talk to her mother, “Stay, don’t go, sit for a little while” and Talk” (96). Pollock admits, “The closer the play get to me, to something that I really feel, the less polarized I become. The more I move inward, the more ambiguous I felt” (quoted in Wallace and Zimmerman 116)

Catherine’s consciousness becomes fragmented when she learns that her mother has swallowed pills. Catherine is worried about her psychological inheritance, and experiences a sense of seriousness and alienation about her life. Pollock in this play merges the two persona Catherine and Katie to search for their identity:

“Catherine in the mirror, I look in the mirror.

Katie and I see mummy and I see....

Catherine . Gramma, and mummy and me

Katie … I don’t want to be like them (108).

For Catherine and Katie, their mother and their grandmother have come to represent surrender, weakness and suicide. Catherine could not tolerate the miserable life of her mother. The
majority of Pollock's plays have questioned social evils and she speaks of a chain of abuse like a workaholic doctor neglecting his wife and the alcoholic mother neglecting her child. This leads to Catherine's alienation in the family. She says, 'First a girl for a toy, seven years after seven to come' (120). The lyrics of the song express Catherine's fear that her mother had become a victim of the patriarchal tradition. As a grown up woman Catherine could feel for her mother's longing to lead a peaceful life.

In the feminine politic of the play, the irresponsible behaviour of Ev makes him an insensitive autocrat without insight or humanity due to his conventional social attitude imposed on her wife Bob. On the other hand he is impressively committed to the suffering poor and this makes him a dedicated humanitarian. Ev sums up the case against him.

*Supposin' it were, her death my fault, put a figure on it, on? Her death my fault on one side and the other any old figure, thousand lives the figure – was that worth it? (Oscar exits) was it? I'm askin' you a question Was that worth it?* (123).

This humanitarian attitude towards people puts him on the defensive throughout the whole course of the play. Ev's selfishness leads to his wife's alcoholic depression, and death in the family. Bob
reminisces about her personal sense of loss and voices her exclusion in
the family. She wants to achieve her own identity, and free herself
from the constraints of the external world. She is trapped in her
stifling roles as wife and mother which prevent her from achieving
autonomy. Her solitude becomes a form of imprisonment in which she
is controlled by fear and loneliness. Bob chooses alcoholism as a way
of liberating herself from human relationships and from her
conventional husband. But this weakens her to loose her sense of
identity and self worth in the family.

Catherine struggles with her own sense of personal
fragmentation and alienation in the family. She hates her father’s
selfishness which drives her mother into alcoholic depression and at
the same time she hates her mother’s weakness that makes her a victim
in the patriarchal power structure. Unlike her mother who is denied a
chance to continue her work, Catherine struggles in the male-
dominated society to lead an independent life. The unconventional
daughter Catherine fights with her autocratic father even though she is
not supported by her mother. Katherine has two choices in her mind
either to convict her father or to drop the charges. She decides to drop
the charges as Ev has realized his mistake. Her mother’s and
grandmother’s cries for justice is heard by Catherine and by reconciling with her father, she begins a new life.

Catherine rejects the conventional role of a wife and a mother leading to her assertion of female identity. The resourceful daughter finds an alternative course to relieve herself from the constraints in the family. Catherine has transcended the sociological boundaries that continue to confine her untapped resources. With her freedom to scrutinize the life of women who remained trapped within the family, she begins to recognize her own individuality and thereby she achieves a true state of autonomy and selfhood. During the later part of her dramatic career the playwright Sharon Pollock is in the process of a further move towards the exploration of the personal intricacies of social and familial responsibility. In Doc we see a daughter haunted by the specter of her mother and grandmother’s suicide. The autocratic figure of the father oppresses the women in the family. The confined mother succumbs to it and the resourceful daughter gets out, leading to her empowerment.

The play Blood Relations, Whiskey six Cadenza and Doc represent a withdrawal from the larger issues of public life. In the foreground, there is a close focus on the connection between private and public life. Sharon Pollock’s women protagonists refuse to be
subdued and oppressed by male domination. The three plays expose the injustices and continual exploitation that women undergo in androcentric societies. Pollock points out the ironic distance between patriarchal expectations about women and the harsh realities of life. Pollock challenges the power structure that dominates in familial and social relationships. Her women protagonists pass through severe psychological turmoil and achieve an integrated personality. They struggle against male-dominated society to lead an independent life in their families. They try to find an alternative to relieve themselves from the constraints in the family. The women protagonists in these plays struggle against their authoritarian father and succeed in acquiring a female identity and autonomy of their own leading to their empowerment.

Dramatic Techniques

The play Doc demonstrates Pollock's ever increasing capacity to master the complexities of her stage craft as a way of widening her range of dramatic subjects. The play takes the form of a memory play but with three variations on the traditional memory play structure. First rather than a single protagonist two characters share and shape the past conjured in the play. Catherine's accusing
memories are met and in effect rebutted by Ev’s self-justifying ones. Second, the characters are able to talk to each other across the memory frame. The play resembles a trial, with Catherine as a judge of Ev and Bob as prosecutor and the play allows an elaborate cross examination from both Ev and Bob. The third variation is the playwright’s decision to split the character of the daughter into an older and younger self - Catherine and Katie. The two roles are played by two different actors. In a further step from the retrospective time frame, Doc also rejects chronology. The play begins in the present, but then memories from different times in the past take the stage. Several of the memories are repeated - like the repressed past trauma of Catherine “I don’t want to be like them” (108).

Catherine, like Ev, speaks across time and as an adult responds to the observation of Katie. “Dramatic progression is deliberately buried in the kaleidoscope of memory” (VII). The unanswerable question is asked repeatedly throughout the play “was that worth it” (123).
THE LANGUAGE

The language in Doc reveals the oppression of women in Canada. The dialogues between Bob and Catherine reveal how women in the families are suppressed by patriarchal power structure. Bob sings, "first a girl for a toy, seven years after seven to come". (120). The lyrics of the song express Catherine's fear that her mother was affected by patriarchal tradition. Bob's use of the words "prac-tice", "off-office" and "off-ice nurse" reveals her fragmented state of consciousness in the play. The language also reveals Catherine's assertive nature. "I don't want to be like them". (108). She wants to establish her identity through genuine voice and not by mere echoes. The polished language of the father Ev, Bob's songs about her isolation in the family, the words used by Catherine which shows her assertive nature prove that the dramatist Sharon Pollock have highlighted the various problems of the women through her successful use of language.